California Executes Stanley "Tookie" Williams (See page 8)

COMMEMORATOR

Published by the Commemoration Committee for the Black Panther Party

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Rosa Parks' Life: A Call to Carry it On

February 4, 1913 - October 24, 2005

By Melvin Dickson

Rosa Parks, a fighter for freedom and justice on behalf of exploited and oppressed people in her community and everywhere, died on Monday, October 24, 2005 in Detroit, Michigan. Rosa Louise McCauley was born on February 4, 1913, in Tuskegee, Alabama. She married Raymond Parks in 1932. She was 92 when she died.

On May 2, 1980 Rosa Parks visited the Black Panther Party's Oakland Community School in Oakland, California where I had been assigned by the Party to coordinate the cafeteria, which fed three meals daily to over 200 children. The children of the Community School performed a play celebrating Parks' life and presented her with a bouquet of roses. The students performed the famous scene of December 1, 1955 when Rosa Parks defied the bus driver by remaining seated and not giving up her seat — an act of defiance against the Jim Crow laws — which set in motion forces that advanced the civil rights movement in the United States.

Courtesy of Globe

Rosa Parks' booking photo at the Montgomery, Alabama police station in 1954, after refusing to give up her seat on the bus.

Bourgeois-induced popular culture would have us believe the idea that Ms. Parks' famous refusal to give up her seat to a white person on a bus in the Jim Crow South in Montgomery, Alabama on December 1, 1955 was an act of spontaneous individual rebellion on her part, and that this act started the "modern" civil rights movement. That version of history denies the truth of our struggle and the real lessons of Rosa Parks' life.

Rosa Parks was an organizer. Her strength lay in her knowledge and use of the strength of organization. She had participated in organizer training at the famed Highlander Folk School for activists. As early as 1932, Ms. Parks was involved in the movement with the Scottsboro Boys case, a case based on nine young Black men who were accused of raping two white women. As a result of a national organizing campaign, 4 of the men were acquitted and all but 1 of them were ultimately freed. Rosa Parks was also an NAACP official at the local

Continued on page 20

Commemorator Expands Office Space

Literacy campaign, *The Commemorator* spur growth

Commemoration Committee for the Black Panther Party (CCBPP) added 330 square feet of office space this summer, adjacent to and an extension of the facilities we have operated in since CCBPP's inception in 1990. The additional space provides not only a second work room and reception area, but a new entranceway with a professional exterior door sign. Melvin Dickson, CCBPP Chairman and editor of *The Commemorator* said, "This office expansion is vital to the development of CCBPP's Li'l Bobby Hutton Literacy Campaign and the growing national distribution of *The Commemorator*."

CCBPP volunteers have been plastering and painting the new space. Dickson stated, "We do need more hands to help with finalizing the walls and installing new floor covering so we can get fully up and operating." The new office floor plan will include a computer lab with three new work stations so that volunteers can do writing, editing, photo scanning and layout of *The Commemorator* in the computer lab, while other parts of the office can be used simultaneously for orientations for newcomers as well as classes and training sessions for the increasing number of volunteer tutors and learners in the Literacy Campaign and general CCBPP activities.

CCBPP organizers founded the Li'l Bobby Hutton Literacy Campaign in October 2001 with three learners and three tutors. Currently the Literacy Campaign has ten tutors and 13 students. Literacy Campaign volunteer organizers have been canvassing South Berkeley and speaking at churches and with other community leaders throughout the Bay Area about the benefit of the literacy campaign for those who cannot read proficiently. Our goal is to increase the program to 24 students by June 2006. The primary obstacle to expansion of the program is increasing the numbers of volunteers participating as tutors.

Literacy Program Makes a Difference in Low-Income Communities

Students in the program have achieved qualitative gains in both school tests and in performance. According to one tutor, Stephanie Laroux, "One learner who had been at

Continued on page 14

Commemorator Photo

Pamela Thomas, Zachariah Gaines, Eseibio Halliday, Kush Amen, Nia Imara and Aqueila Lewis (left to right in back row) display their certificates after completing the Li'l Bobby Hutton literacy tutor training program. Learners are in front.

Inside This Issue

US Increases Bounty on Assata Shakur .....Page 3
Open Letter from Assata .....Page 4
CCBPP Attends Seattle BPP 37th Reunion ...Page 10
Elections in Haiti .....Page 12

EDITORIAL

Hurricane Katrina: The Government's Criminal Response & Our Responsibility to Act

"We are Americans! Why isn't anyone helping us? Why isn't the government helping us! We're dying!" These cries were heard on national TV as two, three, four, five and more days went by with the government refusing to provide the needed personnel and equipment to rapidly get people out of New Orleans, Biloxi and the many other smaller, low-income communities of Louisiana and Mississippi on the Gulf of Mexico coastline. People who should have been physically aided in evacuating were left to perish from what was one of the greatest natural disasters in the nation's history. The true death toll from Katrina – and from the man-made disasters before and after Katrina hit – are still unknown.

And then Katrina was followed by Hurricane Rita. Once again, the government did virtually nothing to save lives. A token few were airlifted out of the path of the monster storm while millions were left to fend for themselves. Establishment media played along with the government lie that the people were to blame, that they stubbornly and stupidly did not want to leave. For the vast majority, this was simply not the case. They were not to be able to take lifesaving action.

In this day and age of technological advances, the death of thousands of people was clearly and completely avoidable. But the federal and state governments did not prioritize allocation of any and all resources necessary to save lives. They did not send in rescue missions to transport people out by plane, train, ship, bus, helicopter, humvee or carload before the hurricane struck. That is a fact.

Rather, the U.S. government abandoned its responsibilities on a scale of monumental proportions, demonstrating genocidal neglect of the life and death needs of its people.

The U.S. government's response to this disaster exposed overt manifestations of classism and institutionalized racialism. They criminalized the poor, mainly minority, victims of the government's systematic abandonment and abuse. It is plain, both in what they did, and in what they refused to do.

The strength of Hurricane Katrina as it headed for the Gulf coast was known by the National Weather Service and government officials days in advance of its landing – the same was true for Rita. The fact that the levees in New Orleans, built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, were not only in dire need of repair and strengthening, but weren't built to withstand more than a Category 3 hurricane to begin with, was well known by state and federal officials.

In fact, despite engineers' reports of the necessity for substantial levee repairs and improvements following last year's heavy hurricane activity in the Gulf Coast region, this year the federal government made the largest cuts in hurricane and flood-control funding in history, canceling $71.2 million from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' levee construction funds for New Orleans – a 44% budget reduction.

And where did that money go instead? According to statements over a year ago by Walter Maestri, head of emergency management for Jefferson Parish, Louisiana in a June 8, 2004 *Times-Picayune* article, "It appears the money has been moved into the president's budget to handle homeland security and the war in Iraq."

The storm surge of the category 5 hurricane did collapse the levees in New Orleans. How ironic that all those millions that had been siphoned off by the federal government to fund the war in Iraq and for so-called "Homeland Security" earlier this year were not used to save a single life of a member of this great homeland.

The fact that one in three people living in New Orleans and tens of thousands more in the outlying Gulf communities were living below the poverty line before the hurricane struck was also well known. Twenty-one percent of all households were Sixty-seven percent of the New Orleans population was black, and 84% of the people in poverty in New Orleans were black. We use the past tense because, from what we can see of official response to date, they have no intention of restoring affordable low-income housing to the 30% of New Orleans residents who were living in poverty before Katrina struck.

The fact is that several hundred thousand people of all colors and ways of life, mostly poor, in the city and in the rural coast areas, were in clear danger of the storm's direct destructive powers and officials knew the majority of people had insufficient funds, transportation or alternative shelter to be able to evacuate the area in time to get out of harm's way. Those living on low monthly fixed incomes whose checks come at the beginning of the month had no cash and no way of getting any cash.

The elderly, disabled, and hospitalized were left to suffer and die – some by drowning, others by lack of needed medicines, oxygen, food and potable water. Thousands of dialysis patients alone are unaccounted for. People with kidney failure cannot survive long without renal dialysis treatment, but there are no news accounts about what happened to them and they are not being counted in the official death toll.

Reports from the Trenches

We know from just these few examples that the establishment media is not publicizing the true death toll. They are not counting the refugees in other states who died of heart attacks because they had no medicine; they are not counting refugees with diabetes who are dead because they had no insulin or developed infections. The media long ago stopped showing the bodies left on the sidewalks.

Photo by Andrew Stern

Former New Orleans chapter Black Panther Party organizer Malik Rahim, a resident of New Orleans still organizing for the rights of low-income and minority people, reveals a victim of Hurricane Katrina, abandoned by U.S. Government neglect.

And people are still dying – from diseases contracted from the contaminated water and from lack of sanitation in the shelters, from going without medical treatment for days and weeks, from every manner of neglect.

Can you have any doubt now that we need to organize, we need to take control, we need to be running things ourselves in the interest of all poor, working and minority people in order to end these policies of government genocide of the poor?

One week after Hurricane Katrina's deadly impact, *The Commemorator* received a call from Unel Mitchell, a 20-year old African-American refugee from New Orleans who had, by then, obtained temporary shelter in a small Arkansas town called Siloan Springs near the Oklahoma border. He said, "Most of the victims are black and poor, and the government allowed it to happen. People are really angry with the government. FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) turned and left us stranded. Everybody knows it. The National Guards were very rude, but every now and then you run into one that's OK.

Continued on page 13

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"SERVING ALL OPPRESSED COMMUNITIES"

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EDITORIAL

Why the U.S. Government Increased the Bounty on Assata

Photo by Kenneth Snodgrass

Assata Shakur, framed by US government in 1978, living in exile in Cuba since 1984.

On May 2, 2005, spokesmen for the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and New Jersey State Troopers announced that the U.S. Department of Justice had increased the bounty on Assata Shakur's head to $1 million in taxpayer dollars. Prior to May 2005, a $150,000 bounty had been posted by the State of New Jersey. The new bounty is the largest award ever set by the federal government for a New Jersey fugitive.

The U.S. Department of Justice announced they had added Assata Shakur to their international terrorist watch list, the same list that bears Osama bin Ladin's name.

It is important to understand that the federal government's tactic of calling Assata Shakur a "terrorist" has as much to do with their goal of destroying the socialist government of Cuba and the "Bolivarian Revolutionary" government of Hugo Chavez in oil-rich Venezuela, as it does with further quelling dissent in the United States by continuing to make an example of Shakur, a black female American revolutionary.

The posting of this unprecedented bounty was denounced by Cuban President Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz in a May 10 radio address when he rejected all calls to hand over Shakur to U.S. authorities, saying she is a victim of racial and political persecution, and is not a terrorist. Castro said, "They wanted to portray her as a terrorist, something that was an injustice, a brutality, an infamous lie."

Fidel Castro suggested that the action to make a great deal of media noise now about the increased bounty and placing Shakur on the terrorist list was intended to counteract Cuba's recent demands that U.S. officials arrest and turn over Luis Posada Carriles, a self-admitted, world-renowned terrorist, who is wanted in Venezuela on charges of blowing up a civilian Cuban jetliner in 1976 – an action that killed 73 people, including the Cuban national fencing team – and for other terrorist acts, including his conviction for involvement in the Bay of Pigs.

In 1998, Posada claimed responsibility for planning attacks on various Cuban establishments including the 1997 bombing of a tourist hotel that resulted in the death of an Italian tourist and the wounding of 11 others. In 2000 he was arrested in Panama for plotting to murder President Castro during the Ibero-American Summit being held there. Posada was convicted and sentenced to eight years in prison. He was subsequently pardoned and released in November 2004 by Mireya Moscoso, the outgoing Panamanian President.

Both the President of Venezuela and the people of Cuba have been demanding that U.S. President Bush return Posada to Venezuela to stand trial ever since Posada snuck into the U.S. earlier this year and requested political asylum. Castro had announced a call for a massive rally on May 17 in front of the U.S. diplomatic mission in Havana to demand Posada's arrest.

Posada, a known CIA operative was, according to his lawyer, Eduardo Soto, residing in Miami, Florida until he was relocated to an El Paso, Texas detention center and scheduled for a detention hearing on August 30. Posada disappeared from public view for several months and popped up in Miami in March 2005 where he filed a petition for political asylum.

Even William Delahunt, Democrat from Massachusetts, member of the U.S. House of Representatives and a former DA, stated recently in reference to Posada, "I can't imagine how one could defend a terrorist where there exists overwhelming evidence that he was responsible, or a co-conspirator, in blowing up a civilian airline." Yet he and convicted fellow terrorist, Orlando Bosch, who escaped from Venezuela and came to Miami in 1987 with the assistance of the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF), Jeb Bush and his father, are living comfortably in the United States, while the U.S. government refuses to carry out its own laws and rules about terrorists, instead giving protection to anti-communist terrorists.

Cuba has a long history of materially supporting the national liberation struggles of oppressed people including

Continued on page 8

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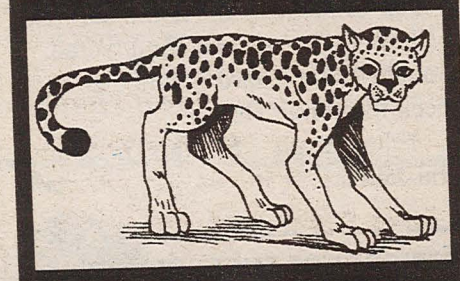

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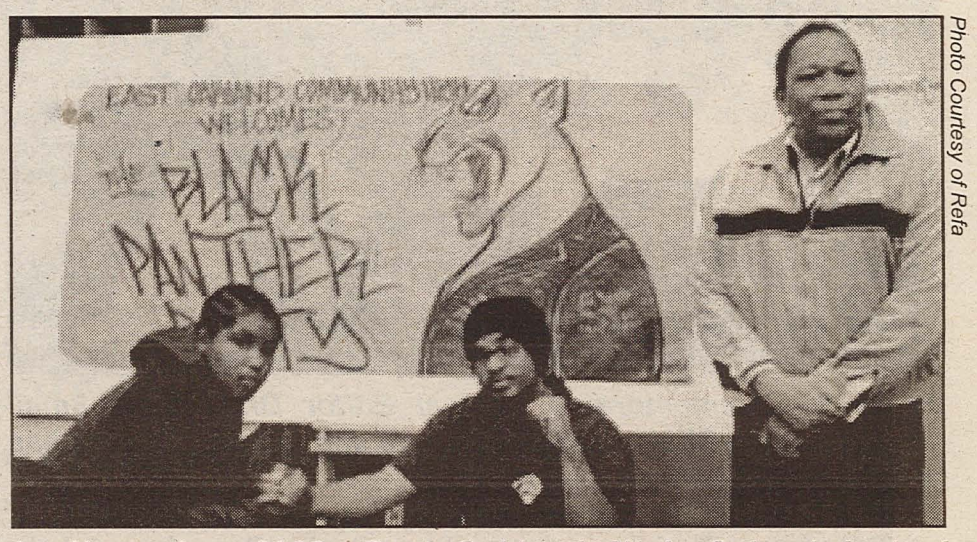

Photo Courtesy of Refa

In November 2005, East Oakland High School invited Commemorator editor Melvin Dickson (right) to give a presentation on the history and legacy of the Black Panther Party. Art instructor Refa (middle) and student (left) attended.

Five year-old to sixteen year-old children of low-income and working class communities and neighborhoods across the country are struggling to obtain an education in ineffective and under-funded public schools. Those schools are now getting worse under the so-called education law called "No Child Left Behind," devised by the Bush Administration and passed by the U.S. Congress in 2002.

Point 5 of the Black Panther Party "Education that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society…education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present-day society." The goal of having an education is to acquire the tools needed to change our lives; an education in how to organize to end poverty, an education in developing a health care system that actually provides health care to all people, an education in how to build an economy that actually provides for the needs of the people.

We need an education system that teaches our real history, the truth of what this government's policies actually are and their material effects on peoples' lives throughout the world. That starts with teaching our people how to read, when the current system has refused to. That includes giving our people a reason to learn to read, providing the materials that they need to be able to read, and providing the information they need to know to be able to make change.

Look at what federal government is doing with the public education system. "No Child Left Behind" has created a mechanism that blames the teachers for poor quality education, and then penalizes the teachers and students for what is, in fact, the government's theft of tax dollars.

Under the "No Child Left Behind" law, public taxpayer money is diverted to private companies that get paid to tutor children in schools that are failing. Teachers are forced to "teach" our young people, not how to analyze or reason, but only how to pass the government tests. But passing their tests is not a measure of the quality of the education being provided.

Under the "No Child Left Behind" law, a school in a poor area whose students fail to pass the tests at high enough rates is required to use 20% of its funds to support transfers of students out of the school to other schools. No additional funding is provided to improve the failing school, which guarantees that it will continue to fail and that those children who cannot transfer out will be left with a sub-standard [illegible]. law, no funding is provided to build new schools to improve the teaching environment and lower the classroom size. But it does permit failing public schools to be taken over and managed by private companies operating the schools for profit. Lucrative contracts are being issued by government officials to companies such as Edison to take over and run the schools as for-profit entities.

According to the Education Industry Association (EIA), an association of education entrepreneurs, education is now a trillion-dollar industry in the U.S. representing 10% of the gross domestic product. EIA recognizes that the law's punitive effects on poor schools offers a "market opportunity" for the private enterprises it represents, and these enterprises have increased tremendously since the NCLB law was passed, taking advantage of the public dollars. They call it the "education industry" now. These include private after-school tutoring agencies, charter schools, school management services, suppliers, etc. It's a big business.

The president's brother, Governor Jeb Bush of Florida, even founded a software company called Ignite, that produces programs to coach children (whose parents can afford to buy this software) on how to pass the standardized tests.

While the government is busy devising new ways to steal our money and give it to corporate America and make the wealthy even wealthier (Bush's administration has given over a trillion dollars to the wealthy through tax cuts since he took office in

Continued on page 9

Opinion

Open letter from Assata Shakur

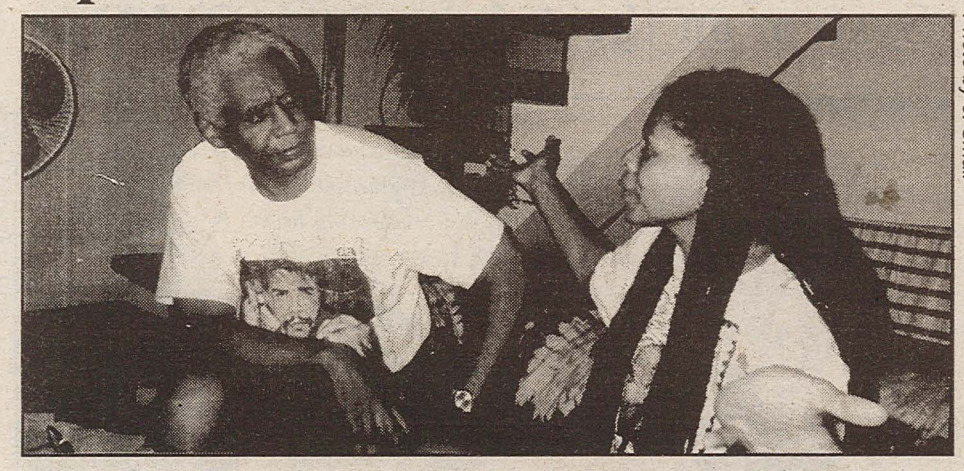

Photo by J. Small

In 1978, Commemorator Medical Editor Dr. Tolbert Small visited Assata Shakur in Cuba, where she resides. Shakur has a bounty on her head.

Editor's note: The following letter was written by Assata Shakur in 1998 from Cuba where she has been living in exile since 1984, protected by the Cuban government and the Cuban people. This letter was previously printed in The Commemorator *in August 1998.*

We reprint it now at the request of Shakur's supporters due to the seriously heightened threat on Shakur's life and on the socialist Republic of Cuba following U.S. government actions placing Shakur on international and domestic terrorist watch lists and the increased bounty for her capture – dead or alive – of an actively pursuing potential bounty hunters or assassins from throughout the U.S. and the Caribbean. (See more on the story Why the US Government Increased the Bounty on Assata Shakur to $1 million on page 3)

My name is Assata Shakur, and I am a 20th century escaped slave. Because of government persecution, I was left with no other choice than to flee from the political repression, racism and violence that dominate the United States government's policy towards people of color. I am an ex-political prisoner, and I have been living in exile in Cuba since 1984.

I have been a political activist most of my life, and although the U.S. government has done everything in its power to criminalize me, I am not a criminal, nor have I ever been one. In the 1960s, I participated in various struggles: the black liberation movement, the student rights movement, and the movement to end the war in Vietnam. I joined the Black Panther Party. By 1969 the Black Panther Party had become the number one organization targeted by the FBI's COINTELPRO program. Because the Black Panther Party demanded the total liberation of black people, J. Edgar Hoover called it "greatest threat to the internal security of the country" and vowed to destroy it, its leaders and activists.

In 1978, my case was one of many cases bought before the United Nations in a petition filed by the National Conference of Black Lawyers, the National Alliance Against Racism and Political Repression, and the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice, exposing the existence of political prisoners in the United States, their political persecution, and the cruel and inhumane treatment they the report:

The FBI and the New York Police Department in particular, charged and accused me of participating in attacks on law enforcement personnel and widely circulated such charges and accusations among police agencies and units. The FBI and the NYPD further charged me as being a leader of the Black Liberation Army which the government and its respective agencies described as an organization engaged in the shooting of police officers. This description of the Black Liberation Army and the accusation of my relationship to it was widely circulated by government agents among police agencies and units.

As a result of these activities by the government, I became a hunted person; posters in police precincts and banks described me as being involved in serious criminal activities; I was highlighted on the FBI's most wanted list; and to police at all levels, I became a 'shoot-to-kill' target."

I was falsely accused in six different "criminal cases" and in all six of these cases I was eventually acquitted or the charges were dismissed. The

Continued on page 9

Assata: Terrorist or Victim of Terrorism

By Mumia Abu-Jamal

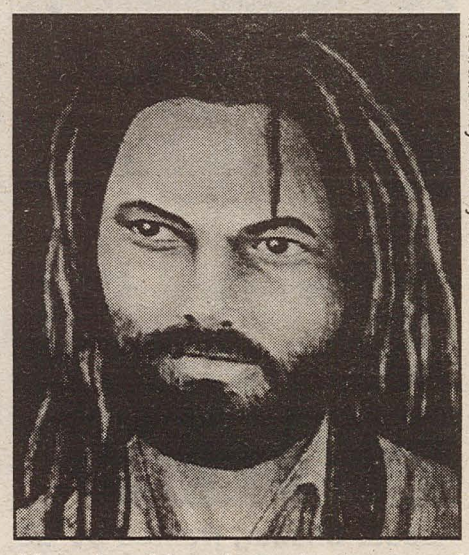

Illustration by Kiilu Nyasha

Mumia Abu-Jamal, targeted by US government.

With the news of the posting of an additional eight hundred and fifty thousand dollars for the return of former Black Panther and Black Liberation Army member Assata Shakur from Cuba, the U.S. government has taken another step in its ridiculous so-called War on Terrorism. They did this by New Jersey officials branding Assata with the latest libelous label "terrorist" in an attempt to justify this modern day slave bounty. If anybody knows about terrorism it's Americans, for this nation was founded in terrorism. So deep is this truth that it lies in the subconscious of almost every American and can be unleashed with unnerving ease. Come on. Complete this phrase "The only good Indian is a _____." Whether we're Black, white, rich or poor that phrase echoes in American consciousness, an inheritance from a time when those dark thoughts were dark realities of, yes, genocide against the native peoples that fed and healed the starving settlers from Europe who survived the Atlantic crossings. Terrorism, white terrible violence against red life and black life and brown life and yellow life. That is America's truest hidden [illegible] men are created equal."

In 1973, when Assata Shakur and Zaid Malik Shakur and Sundiata Acoli were stopped on the New Jersey turnpike, they weren't stopped because the cops wanted to "render assistance." This was a car stop for the unwritten crime of driving while Black, before we developed the term. And the cops tried to kill every Black Panther in that car, for this unwritten crime. Zaid was shot to death and Assata was shot twice. And in an act of arrogance that only American judicial terrorists can devise, she was charged with murdering both Zaid and the cop that tried to kill her. Assata went through a devil's brew of show trials in several states, best summed up in a book by her lawyer/aunt Evelyn Williams titled Inadmissible Evidence. These were trials that seemed more fitting for Mississippi than Middlesex County, New Jersey, or Manhattan borough, New York. But no matter where that happened, they featured all white juries, and ambitious judges who didn't even pretend to be fair and unbiased arbiters. Even despite these obvious obstructions, she was occasionally acquitted, and when she was convicted in Middlesex, it was clear this was a verdict not of her guilt, but of her political ideas. To label this woman a terrorist, is to bleed all meaning from the word. For, during her life as an activist, during her wounding and her arrest, and during her travails as an accused in courtrooms that were more lynching posts than halls of justice, she was terrorized by a system that wanted to punish her for daring to rebel.

It is fitting that these words are written on May 13, 2005, twenty years to the day from the police mass murder and bombing of the MOVE home in Philadelphia. Today, twenty years later, only one person, Ramona Africa, ever spent a day in jail. What of those cops who shot and bombed unarmed children? What of the politicians who unleashed these dogs of urban war? Like Ramona, Assata was jailed for daring to survive.

Cuba's valiant Fidel Castro responded almost immediately to announce his refusal to recognize this modern day slave bounty. He pronounced her a political prisoner during her time in American Gulags, perhaps remembering that she was held in an all-male jail during her incarceration.

For centuries, nothing has so stirred up American fury like the escape of a slave. That ain't just distant history. For daring to slip her bonds and escape from brutal and unjust bondage, the Empire now labels her a terrorist. That's because to them, nothing is more terrifying than resistance to their imperial will. As for terrorists, if they really wanna find some, it shouldn't be too hard to find them. Just check the White House.

From death row, this is Mumia Abu-Jamal.

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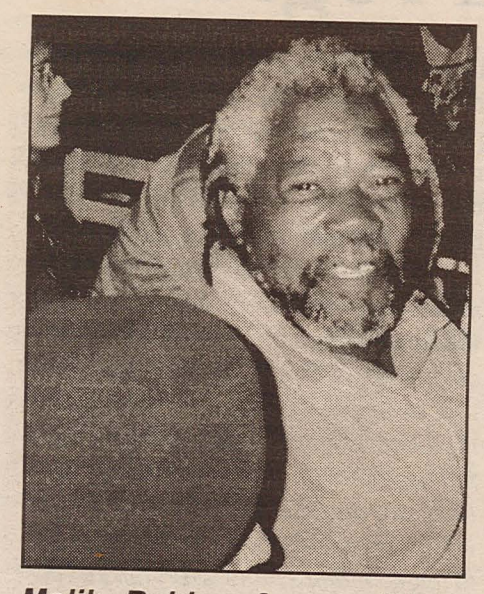


Commemorator Photo

Malik Rahim, former Black Panther from New Orleans, assumed leadership on behalf of the victims and survivors of Katrina.

Friends of Malik Rahim, a former member of the Black Panther Party in New Orleans, forwarded this open statement/letter from Malik to The Commemorator. *Malik had been organizing public housing tenants, both in New Orleans and San Francisco, for decades, and recently ran for New Orleans City Council on a Green Party ticket. Since writing this letter, Malik has been a catalyst in the organizing of a community-based, mutual-aid relief effort now running in his neighborhood of Algiers, the only part of New Orleans that was not flooded by Katrina. They now have a community-run temporary clinic and relief center called Common Ground.*

For poor and minority people in the U.S., every day is a disaster. Over a million people have now been forced to leave their homes on the Gulf Coast. Some of them may now be in your town. Please contact The Commemorator *to find out what you can do to help build organizations and campaigns for aid and recovery in your community and/or directly in the hurricane disaster zones.*

Dear Editor,

It's criminal. From what you're hearing, the people trapped in New Orleans are nothing but looters. We're told we should be more "neighborly." But nobody talked about being neighborly until after the people who could afford to leave … left.

If you ain't got no money in America, you're on your own. People were told to go to the Superdome, but they have no food, no water there. And before they could get in, people had to stand in line for 4-5 hours in the rain because everybody was being searched one by one at the entrance.

I can understand the chaos that happened after the tsunami, because they had no warning, but here there was plenty of warning. In the three days before the hurricane hit, we knew it was coming and everyone could have been evacuated.

We have Amtrak here that could have carried everybody out of town. There were enough school buses that could have evacuated 20,000 people easily, but they just let them be flooded. My son watched 40 buses go underwater - they just wouldn't move them, afraid they'd be stolen.

There are gangs of white vigilantes near here riding around in pick-up trucks, all of them armed, and any young Black they see who they figure doesn't belong in their community, they shoot him. I tell them, "Stop! You're going to start a riot."

When you see all the poor people with no place to go, feeling alone and helpless and angry, I say this is a consequence of HOPE VI. New Orleans took all the HUD money it could get to tear down public housing, and families and neighbors who'd relied on each other for generations were uprooted and torn apart.

Most of the people who are going through this now had already lost touch with the only community they'd ever known. Their community was torn down and they were scattered. They'd already lost their real homes, the only place where they knew everybody, and now the places they've been staying are destroyed…

This is criminal. These people are dying for no other reason than the lack of organization…

The hurricane hit at the end of the month, the time when poor people are most vulnerable. Food stamps don't buy enough but for about three weeks of the month, and by the end of the month everyone runs out. Now they have no way to get their food stamps or any money, so they just have to take what they can to survive.

Many people are getting sick and very weak. From the toxic water that people are walking through, little scratches and sores are turning into major wounds.

People whose homes and families were not destroyed went into the city right away with boats to bring the survivors out, but law enforcement told them they weren't needed. They are willing and able to rescue thousands, but they're not allowed to.

Every day, countless volunteers are trying to help, but they're turned back. Almost all the rescue that's been done has been done by volunteers anyway.

My son and his family — his wife and kids, ages 1, 5 and 8 — were flooded out of their home when the levee broke. They had to swim out until they found an abandoned building with two rooms above water level.

There were 21 people in those two rooms for a day and a half. A guy in a boat who just said, "I'm going to help, regardless," rescued them and took them to Highway I-10 and dropped them there.

They sat on the freeway for about three hours, because someone said they'd be rescued and taken to the Superdome. Finally they just started walking, had to walk six and a half miles.

When they got to the Superdome, my son wasn't allowed in — I don't

Continued on page 17

Indeterminate Sentencing

Courtesy of Romaine "Chip" Fitzgerald

Longest held BPP political prisoner in the United States.

Dear Editor,

Writing on the indeterminate sentence, I have no resource or reference material nor access to the anemic library here; so I had to come from purely memory and experience. But in my reflection a clear picture emerges – since the California Prison Movement was successful in the struggle to reform the indeterminate sentence, right-wing legislators have persistently passed draconian laws and increased many determinate sentences to indeterminate status.

The indeterminate sentencing legislation (ISL) was abolished by Senate Bill 42 in July 1976. However, for kidnapping and first degree murder the sentence remains indeterminate. The right-wing reactionaries and racist hardliners on crime have been driving the policy to toughen sentences since 1977.

At the conclusion of World War II, returning soldiers were having a hard time. The men returning from war – the majority of whom were white — had suffered both psychological and emotional trauma from their participation in the horrors of war. Compounding the difficulty of reintegration, the ex-soldiers were not prepared to meet the new requirements of an American industry that was gearing up to mass produce washing machines, refrigerators, televisions and so on. They did not have the skills industry was demanding. So, out of work, many war veterans turned to criminal conduct.

With the war veterans becoming a greater percentage of the prison population, "enlightened" penologists saw that social phenomenon as an opportunity to implement the Rehabilitation Theory to solve the problem of criminal behavior.

Rehabilitation Theory

The basic assumption of Rehabilitation theory is that the individual alone is responsible for his/her attitude and behavior, and that social factors do not play a significant role.

This theory says the individual's behavior is wrong, and seeks to correct it through self-help and self-improvement programs — psychotherapy, vocational and educational programs. For the prisoner to have access to and pursue benefits and rewards should modify the individual's criminal behavior and help him/her become productive in society.

The Indeterminate Sentence

Essential to this is the indeterminate sentence. The indeterminate sentence became law in California in 1949. Here are several examples of the indeterminate sentencing law: for the violation of Grand Theft Auto, the sentence was one year to five years, which meant the Parole Board – then known as the Adult Authority – could set a parole date to release the prisoner after six months of the one to five year sentence or be held for the entire five year period. For the conviction of First Degree Armed Robbery, the sentence was five years to life. The first appearance before the Adult Authority for parole was at 18 months; however, the Adult Authority could hold a prisoner indefinitely if s/he continued to show no signs of rehabilitation.

Progressive for Whites Only

The indeterminate sentence was a "progressive" concept — it served as felons to become "new and improved" human beings through rehabilitative programs that would shorten their stay in prison. But those entrusted with the responsibility to put the theory into practice used it to manipulate and control people for their own interests.

Whenever it was convenient for the prison bureaucrats and their rightwing allies in the legislature to increase the California prison population beyond capacity to justify the request for budget increases or new prison expansion, parole denials would make a dramatic rise; and when it became expedient to reduce overcrowding, the parole board would give out short parole dates.

This became obvious as racial demographics in prison began to change. The indeterminate sentence was transformed into a tool of manipulation, control, discrimination, injustice and repression.

When the rehabilitation theory was conceived and implemented, the prison population was overwhelmingly white. The prison administrators were white men, operating from a Euro-American value system that viewed people of color as inferior and inclined to "deviant" behavior.

By the 1960s, the indeterminate sentence had become a tool of racial discrimination and repression — people of color served longer sentences in spite of their level of rehabilitation, whereas white prisoners were paroled; any prisoner who displayed an inclination towards militant and radical politics were denied parole as a subversive or communist.

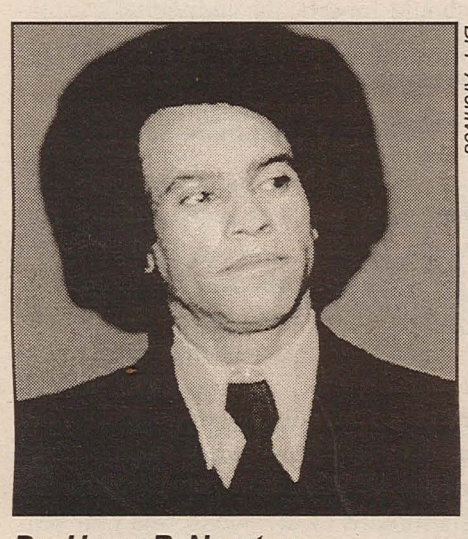
It was the generation of urban blacks born in the late 1930s and early

Continued on page 17

Archives

Discrediting Constructive Party Programs

Huey's Corner



BPP Archives

Dr. Huey P. Newton

Editor's Note: *the following article by Dr. Huey P. Newton was taken from his 1977 Ph.D. Dissertation on the History of Consciousness. The thesis was published by the Huey P. Newton Foundation in a book called* War Against the Panthers: A Study of Oppression in America *(Writer and Readers, 1999), and is available at your local bookstore.*

The FBI was most disturbed by the Panthers' survival programs providing breakfast program, in which the Party provided free hot breakfasts to children in Black communities throughout the United States, was, as already noted, a particular thorn in the side of J. Edgar Hoover. Finding little to criticize about the program objectively, the Bureau decided to destroy it.

The tactics employed to ruin the breakfast program illustrate the lengths to which the Bureau would go. In 1969, for instance, Party leaders rejected a so-called "comic book," without captions or words that was drawn by an alleged Party member. It depicted police as caricature "pigs" and was submitted by the member to Party leaders for possible purposes of political propaganda.

After its rejection by Party leaders, however, an informant for the FBI stole one of the few drafts of this proposed publication and delivered it to the FBI. Thereupon the FBI added captions advocating violence, printed thousands of copies bearing the Party's name, and circulated them throughout the country, particularly to merchants and businesses who contributed to the breakfast program.[120]

Those who received these so-called Panther "comics" were falsely told and led to believe by the FBI that they were given out by the Panthers to children participating in the breakfast programs. Not surprisingly, many merchants who supported the program withdrew from it, as did others who had lent their support.

Churches assisting the Panthers in the breakfast program were also harassed by the FBI in order to deter them from continuing support. In San Diego, an FBI official placed telephone calls and wrote anonymous letters to the Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of the Catholic Church in 1969 falsely claiming to be parishioners upset about the priest's support of the breakfast program.[121] Within one month of these calls, this priest was transferred from the San Diego Diocese to the State of New Mexico. The FBI reported in an internal memorandum that the priest had been "neutralized" and that the breakfast program in San Diego had been destroyed.[122]

Huey Newton noted of another constructive Party program, "our Intercommunal News Service and weekly paper, *The Black Panther*, have become central in the Black Panther survival programs.[123] The FBI apparently agreed, stating in a 1970 Headquarters memorandum to field offices that:

The Black Panther Party newspaper is one of the most effective propaganda operations of the BPP.

Distribution of this newspaper is increasing at a regular rate thereby influencing a greater number of individuals in the United States along the Black extremist lines.

Each recipient submits by 6/5/70 proposed counterintelligence measures, which will hinder the vicious propaganda being spread by the BPP. tion in excess of 100,000 and has reached the height of 139,000. It is the voice of the BPP and if it could be effectively hindered, it would result in helping to cripple the BPP. Deadline being set in view of the need to receive recommendations for the purpose of taking appropriate action expeditiously.[124]

The San Diego Field Office responded by noting that, while the BPP newspaper presumably had the same legal immunity from tax laws as other newspapers, three California statues might be selectively used against *The Black Panther*. One was a state tax on printing equipment; the second, a "rarely used transportation tax law", and the third, a law, prohibiting business in a residential area.[125]

In addition, the San Diego Field Office suggested spraying the newspaper printing room with a foul-smelling chemical:

The Bureau may also wish to consider the utilization of "Skatol," which is a chemical agent in powdered form and when applied to a particular surface emits an extremely noxious odor rendering the premises surrounding the point of application uninhabitable. Utilization of such a chemical of course would be dependent upon whether an entry could be achieved into the area, which is utilized for the production of The Black Panther.[126]

Finally, the San Diego Division also thought that threats from another radical organization against the newspaper might convince the BPP to cease publication:

Another possibility which the Bureau may wish to consider would be the composition and mailing of numerous letters to BPP Headquarters from various points throughout the country on stationary [sic] containing the national emblem of the Minutemen organization. These letters, in several different forms, would all have the common theme of warning the Black Panthers to cease publication or drastic measures would be taken by the Minutemen organization.

Utilization of the Minutemen organization through direction of informants within that group would also be a very effective measure for the disruption of the publication of this newspaper.[127]

The San Francisco Field Office [illegible] *Black Panther* printing schedules and circulation. It discouraged disruption of nationwide distribution because the airline which had contracted with the Panthers might lose business or face a lawsuit and recommended instead:

A vigorous inquiry by the Internal Revenue Service to have The Black Panther *report their income (sic) from the sale of over 100,000 papers each week. Perhaps the bureau through liaison at SOG [seat of government] could suggest such a course of action. It is noted that Internal Revenue Service at San Francisco is receiving copies of Black Panther Party funds and letterhead memoranda.*

It is requested that the bureau give consideration to discussion with Internal Revenue Service requesting financial records and income tax returns for The Black Panther.[128]

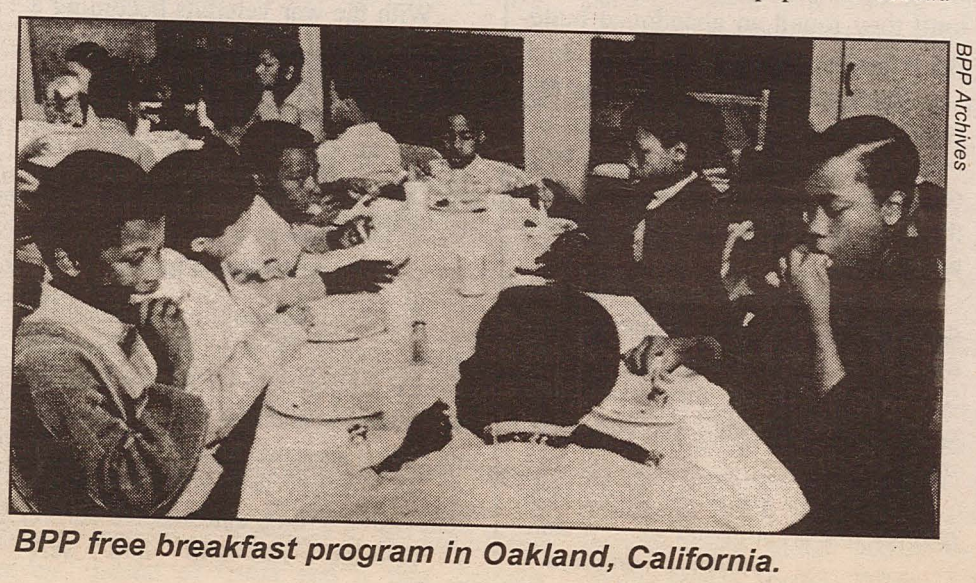
On another occasion, however, FBI agents contacted United Airlines officials and inquired about the rates being charged for transporting *The Black Panther* newspaper. A bureau memorandum states that the BPP was being charged "the general rate" for printed material, but that in the future it would be forced to pay the "full legal rate allowable for newspaper shipment." The memorandum continued:

Officials advise this increase means approximately a forty percent increase. Officials agree to determine consignor in San Francisco and from this determine consignees throughout the United States so that it can impose full legal tariff. They believe the airlines are due the differences in freight tariffs as noted above for the past six to eight months, and are considering discussions with their legal staff concerning suit for recovery of deficit [T]hey estimate that in New York alone will exceed ten thousand dollars.[129]

In August 1970, the New York Field Office reported that it was considering plans

directed against (1) the production of the BPP newspaper; (2) the distribution of that newspaper and (3) the use of information contained in particular issues for topical counterintelligence proposals.

The NYO [New York Office] realizes the financial benefits coming to the BPP through the sale of their newspaper; continued efforts will be made to derive logical and practical plans to thwart this crucial BPP operation.[130]



BPP Archives

BPP free breakfast program in Oakland, California.

End Notes:

[120]The Director of the FBI was quite explicit about the reasons for his opposition to the BPP breakfast programs. "The Breakfast for Children Program (BCP) has been instituted by the BPP in several cities to provide a stable breakfast for ghetto children … the program has met with some success and has resulted in considerable favorable publicity for the BPP … The resulting publicity tends to portray the BPP in a favorable light and clouds the violent nature of the group and its ultimate aim of insurrection. The BCP promotes at least tacit support for the BPP among naïve individuals … and, what is more distressing, provides the BPP with a ready audience composed of highly impressionable youth … Consequently, the BCP represents *the best and most influential activity going for the BPP and, as such, is potentially the greatest threat to efforts by authorities …to neutralize the BPP and destroy what it stands for.*" (FBI Airtel form Director to SAC's in 27 field offices, May 15, 1969. Emphasis added.)

[121]FBI Memorandum from San Diego Field Office to Hqtrs, August 29, 1969.

[122]FBI Memoranda from San Diego Field Office to Hqtrs, September 18, 1969 and October 6, 1969.

[123]Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide,*. P.143.

[124]FBI Memorandum from Hqtrs to Chicago and seven other field offices, May 15, 1970.

[125]FBI Memorandum from San Diego Field Office to Hqtrs, May 20, 1970.

[126]Ibid., p. 2

[127]Ibid., p. 3

[128]FBI Memorandum from San Francisco Field Office to Hqtrs, May 22, 1970.

[129]FBI Memorandum from New York Field Office to Hqtrs and San Francisco Field Office, October 11, 1969.

[130]FBI Memorandum from New York Field Office to Hqtrs, August 19, 1970.

All Power to the People!

Kids Corner

Literacy Students Reflect on Their World

Editor's Note: *The following poems and stories were written by students of the Li'l Bobby Hutton Literacy Program. Each Saturday morning, tutors and students meet to discuss ideas and current events as related to the students' lives. The purpose is to instill a sense of environment as it relates to conditions and to the students in order to advance problem solving in their community.*

Learning critical thinking is a weapon for change and liberation. Learning how to think can be fun.

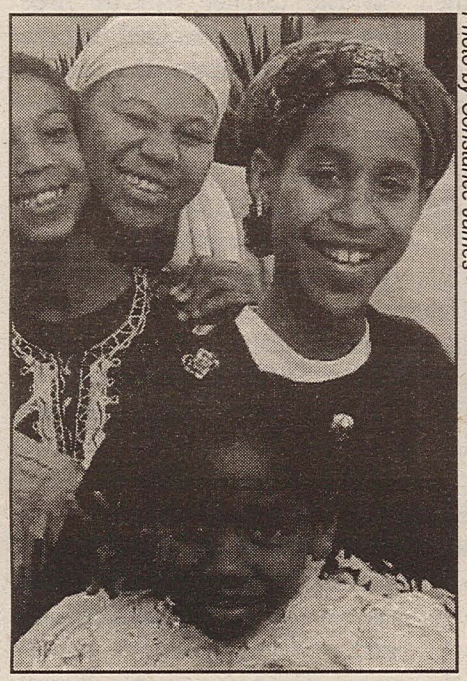


Photo by Constance James

Raeesah Waqia (top right) with family members.

Restrained

Aliyah Abdullah, 13

Restrained from dreams
Restrained from family
Life makes you restrained, but sometimes happy.
You may think you have it all,
but, one move you might have a big fall.
Everything is gained
Everything is restrained
Once you lose someone important
you may think you have nothing to live for
It holds you back
It breaks your heart
and, it may never be sealed back.
Once someone comes in your life
they think they're as cool as ice.
You hold back from them like they have lice.
But, once you take that next step closer to them
they vanish and never return.
It is sad, but it is true
you may become a shrew
just steeled and hardened.
Nothing gained
Just restrained.

The World

By Quanisha, 15

Hi, my name is Quanisha and I'm gonna tell you about something in this world. There are grown ups and young boys on the corner shooting dice and having fun. Cops come and mess everything up and check for drugs on them and take them to jail. Young girls are getting pregnant and some of them are getting HIV. I feel like if you have HIV, you should tell your mate and go see a doctor. I know how some wish they would of put on protection. There are homeless people on the streets starving and we (people) are eating in a house. Why can't we help others? We need to think about people, care, and love them because this life is too short. This reminds me of Hurricane Katrina. The people there didn't have any food, clothes, covers and other stuff. Some families were missing, some people were dead, and some people were stuck on their house and were thirsty. It makes me feel sad.

Oh, Lord of Katrina

By Raeesah Waqia, 15

Oh, Lord of Katrina, Why have you hurt us so?

Oh, Lord of Katrina, Why won't you let us know?

Oh, Lord of Katrina, Why have you done us wrong.

Broken us down and left us alone. Children without their parents, parents without their children.

Oh, Lord of Katrina, Why didn't you let us know how angry you were? Why couldn't you have taken it out somewhere else and left us alone. But wait, why am I complaining to you? I should be thanking you. For getting the children back with their parents, and parents back with their children. Thank you for helping those who were in a struggle get through. You may have done a few negative things but we should look at the positive side of things. Because if everything was negative, everyone would've died. Those who were meant to go on living did. Even though you have hurt so many. I can't be mad because there were still plenty that made it. So, Lord of Katrina, oh, Lord of the land and the lord of the people, even though these people are left alone, some will soon appreciate what was done.

A Favorite Moment

By Kristoff, 10

Li'l Bobby Hutton is one of the first African-Americans to join the Black Panther Party.

I like the Li'l Bobby Hutton program because there are fun things to do. I do remember a favorite moment at the program like watering the grass with my friend Baron. It is fun at the program all the time. And my god cousin, Cyioune makes me happy most of the time. He chases me down the stairs sometimes. There's nothing I don't like about this program. We could play musical chairs for one dollar and whoever wins will win prizes sometimes. We can even do art by making bead necklaces. I wish that we could have Halloween parties every Halloween.

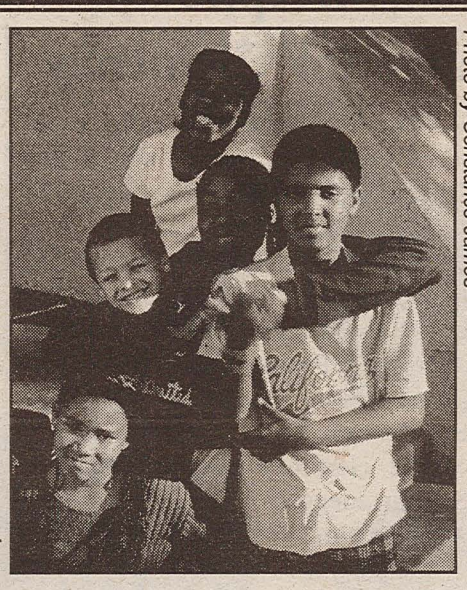


Photo by Constance James

Front bottom: Alon. Standing (left to right): Edward, Cyioune, Quanisha, Khyla.

Hurricane Story

By Shakila, 8

"Hurricane Katrina hit in New Orleans and if our home was lost."

I would be sad and mad because I would think that I didn't have a home anymore, and my heart would be broken up. I would be scared because I would have to go with somebody I didn't even know, and I would be thankful because the people helped me, but I would be scared the same time the people helped me out. I would not see my family, and if the people didn't help me, I would be dead.

Pain

By Haneefah Abdullah, 12

Pain, it hurts when your friends let you down, and it's scary when your friends aren't around.

Toughness and crying for someone you lost. Losing and dying is not a very good cost.

Pain is like what happened from natural disasters. People say "Please, Stop! Stop!" but it only gets faster.

Pulling and pushing every step of the way. Juggling and hustling trying to keep in one place.

Forces you can't stop, losing your family too. But when it comes to these times, you wish you were through.

God sent us down to live a beautiful life. But he will only take us up when the time is right.

Fun Things Like Math

By Alon, 9

I like to do fun things like math, reading and other fun activities at the Li'l Bobby Hutton Literacy Program. I like everything at the Li'l Bobby Hutton Literacy Program; even the things that I need to know about Harriet Tubman. I wish that we could have a lot more people come to the Friday Program and Saturday Program.

Li'l Bobby Hutton was someone who couldn't read or write for fifteen years. He joined the Black Panther Party and taught himself to read.

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State of California Executes Stanley "Tookie" Williams Despite International Campaign for Clemency

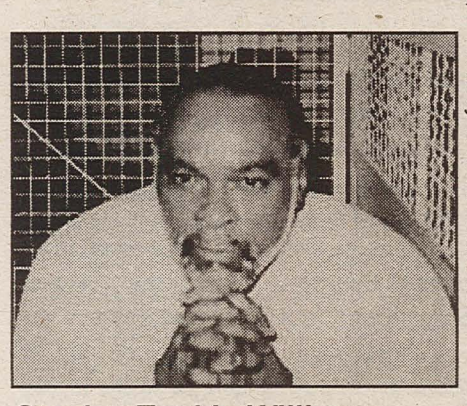

Photo by SAVE TOOKIE.ORG

Stanley Tookie Williams

Stanely "Tookie" Williams was executed by lethal injection by the State of California on December 13, 2005 at 12:35 a.m. after a denial of clemency by California Governor Schwarzenegger on December 12, 2005 , and the refusal by U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor on December 12 to grant a stay of execution. Willams had been found guility of murder charges in a 1981 trial. His defense team had been working for reversal of his sentence and submitted a petition for clemency to commute his sentence to life in prison. The national and international campaign for his life had been joined by Anti-Death Penalty groups as well as former members of the Crips gang which Williams had co-founded in the 1970's in Los Angeles, and leaders of religious communities across the country.

In trying to save Williams'life, his supporters launched a national and international campaign for clemency on his behalf, wich gained support from such people as jesse Jackson and Winnie Mandela. In fact, Mandela has committed to ensuring him a final resting place in South Africa.

On November 19, 2005, volunteers from the Commemoration Committee for the Black Panther Party join about a thousand people who came out to show support. Williams spent 24 years in prison for the murders of four people that he claimed he did not do. Williams' defense maintained that the State did not prove Williams guilty, and that Williams did not receive a fair trial, and that the only reason the State of California found him "guilty" is because he is a cofounder of the Los Angles street gang, the Crips.

The November 19 rally, organized by Barbara Becnel, who is also Director of Richmond's Neighborhood House, featured speakers from the Bay Area religious communities, including Muslim, Buddhist, and Christian leaders. Spokesmen from Anti-Death Penalty Groups as well as former gang members like Mr. Broadus lent their support to an unsuccessful clemency plea to Governor Schwarzenegger.

Williams' defense decried the institutionalized racism in jury selection and other inequities in Williams' 1981 trial. Also, Williams' defense and supporters pointed to William's positive influence on the lives of many would-be gang members and his peace-making work with the gangs has been credited with saving lives. He became a positive role model for young people.

He wrote extensively on the negative effects of gang violence, and affiliation. He established an Internet project for street peace. For these efforts, Williams was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize several times, and won commendation from President George Bush for his many hours of volunteer work on behalf of young people.

"He helped me change my life for the better," Calvin Broadus, alias "Snoop Dogg", the famous rapper and former "Crips" gang member, and the featured speaker, said of Stanley "Tookie" Williams outside the gates of San Quentin at a November 19 rally. He spoke to the audience and urged the Governor to give clemency to Mr. Williams.

"Stanley "Tookie" William, with his extraordinary talents and vision, grew up on streets of Los Angles, and was a victim of exploitative and oppressive conditions just as millions of poor people, blacks, and people of color are victimized by these conditions," stated Melvin Dickson, Chairman of the Commemoration Committee for the Black Panther Party (CCBPP). "If we are to stop the slaughter of our people, we have to organize now! CCBPP needs organizers to learn a systemic method of winning power in this country."

All Power to the People

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Build a New Education System

Continued from page 3

2000), our children are not sure if their school will be open next month, or if their favorite teacher will be fired because the state has decided that the teacher failed to meet the new "teaching to the test" criteria.

This law has generated collusion of private and public interests at an unprecedented level, second only to the war in Iraq where half the forces fighting, and supporting those who are fighting are, in fact, contract workers hired through private companies like Bechtel and Halliburton allegedly to rebuild Iraq, a county the US military has devastated.

In the "No Child Left Behind" law, Section 9528 gives the Pentagon access to directories with students names, addresses and phone numbers so that they may be more easily contacted and recruited for military service. U.S. military recruiters deceive our youth and their families daily, offering alleged "opportunities" for college and jobs careers as a way to entice them into joining the military, after which most of the incentives fail to materialize.

"The government is going to continue to offer anything and everything to the poor and the underprivileged youth in order for them to be able to maintain some type of military," stated Sue Niederer, who began organizing parents against the war, after her son, Seth J. Dvorin, a U.S. soldier, was killed in Iraq on February 3, 2004, according to Welfare Warrior, a monthly publication that focuses on mothers who are under attack by government policies.

And now, according to Jonah Zern of Oakland, California, coordinator of Educations not Incarceration, "state administrators have been asked to turn over to military recruiters the records of the students' addresses, phone numbers, and who scored the lowest on SAT tests, which the recruiters are receiving the day after the tests have been scored."

State Take-Over of the Schools

In California, school districts have been taken over by the state since 1991 under the guise of decentralization. The city of Richmond's school district was the first to be placed under state receivership. After 13 years of state control, the district found itself even worse off financially. The district cut sports, music and library programs, which prompted a group of community demonstrators to engage in a hunger strike on the governor's front lawn to bring attention to their plight.

In 2003, with the state facing an historic $450 billion deficit, California took over the Oakland public school district. With the state considering 10,000 public school layoffs, State Senator Don Perata and Assemblywoman Wilma Chan from Oakland authored a bill (SB 39), proposing a $100 million, 20-year loan to bail out the Oakland school district. The catch was that to receive the bail-out dollars, the district had to give up local control. The bill was passed and the state brought in their hatchetman, Randolph Ward, as overseer. Ward was appointed by Fiscal Crisis Management Assistance Team (FCMAT), a corporate-state agency, to run the Oakland school system, that had formerly been administered by the Oakland Unified School District, a public agency. The Oakland community reacted with genuine outrage — teachers went on strike, parents and teachers and community residents organized demonstrations and protests — but they were no match for the collusion of corporate-state, local and state politicians. No politicians stepped forward and denounced the takeover of the district.

In 2004, Governor Schwarzenegger, who ran on a platform of improving education for the children (taking a cue from the Bush administration) is fighting to eliminate the California Teachers Association (CTA) which is fighting against the privatizing of public schools. "The corporate-elite strategy of divide and control is nothing new, as union busting has always been on their agenda. They just seem to be frantically putting the pedal to the metal these days, gambling on their one foothold in California politics (the governor's office) and on their ability to dupe Californians into believing that unions like the California Teachers Association are responsible for the state's economic plight," stated F.T. Salazar, an Oakland teacher, and a *Commemorator* correspondent.

Events over the past three decades portray a protracted campaign to destroy public education entirely. This development brings us to the point that we must address the question of how we will meet the day-to-day educational and survival needs of the children who suffer from these vicious attacks on public services, while at the same time, building the long-range strategy of taking control of our schools and country away from U.S.-based international monopoly capital which gives one trillion dollars to kill poor people in Iraq and elsewhere rather than using that money to build an educational system consistent with the BPP Ten-Point Program.

CCBPP: Your Life Raft to Liberation

"Half the money spent on the war in Iraq could pay for preschool education for 10 million children," according to an editorial in *Mother Warriors Voice* (Spring 2005 Edition, page 21). "That money could provide a free college education to 4 million students. It could enable school systems to hire 1.3 million teachers."

I hope you understand that our role in relation to an already dying, decadent ruling-class mis-education system is to eliminate it and replace it with one that educates the oppressed to end the systemic cause of our oppression.

We are talking about building the type of organization that embraces learning and teaching from the framework of the BPP Ten-Point Program; that guides by organizing collective working-class action through the principles and goals needed to end poverty at all levels of society, such as our demand for living wage jobs, our demand for quality health care for all workers, our demand for decent housing fit for the shelter of human beings. We all need to get busy building the

Continued on next page

Assata Bounty

Continued from page 3

U.S. national minorities and political prisoners such as Assata Shakur and Mumia Abu-Jamal. The U.S. ruling circle hopes to use its $1 million bounty not only to murder Assata Shakur but also to continue its attacks against Cuba, a small country of just over 13 million people with a land mass smaller than Los Angles. Cuba, unlike the U.S., ensures its people can afford to buy food and provides medical care and education to everyone.

The invitation extended to President Castro by U.S. national minority activists and religious leaders to speak at a Cuban Solidarity rally held September 8, 2000 at Riverside Church in Harlem, New York, acknowledged President Castro's and the Cuban people's gallant history of supporting the liberation struggles of colonized peoples against imperialist aggression throughout the world, including Africa, Vietnam, Latin America, the Caribbean and the U.S.

In his speech Dr. Castro noted that a half million Cuban compatriots carried out internationalist relief missions in numerous countries in different parts of the world, especially in Africa, providing medical doctors, teachers, technicians, construction workers or soldiers.

Cuba has committed tens of thousands of volunteer soldiers to the fight against racist and fascist U.S.-backed forces in southern Africa that sought to continue their domination of Mozambique, Angola, Namibia and South Africa.

President Castro, in his Riverside Church speech five years ago, explained:

"Cuba does not have a single investment in any of the countries where our internationalists fulfill their duty. It does not have a single dollar of capital invested, and does not own a single square meter of land…

"Amilcar Cabral, a great African leader, once made a prophetic statement that was an unforgettable honor for us. 'When the Cuban soldiers go home, all they will take with them are the remains of their dead comrades.'

Today Cuba is forging international relations of mutual benefit and solidarity with African, Asian, Caribbean and Latin American nations such as Venezuela where President Hugo Chavez is attempting to organize transnational oil companies to provide oil to Caribbean and Latin American nations at prices that won't bankrupt their economies and collapse their currencies. Venezuela is also providing heating oil at a 40% discount to low-income families in the U.S. through their subsidiary oil company, Citgo. This is in response to a request from 12 U.S. senators to 9 major oil companies in the U.S. to use some of their profits for government fuel assistance programs. Citgo is the only oil company to respond to date. So far, Citgo has provided discounted oil to 40,000 households in Massachusetts and 8,000 households in New York City's South Bronx."

This August, the same week that Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez met with Cuban President Fidel Castro, the right-wing Republican, Reverend Pat Robertson, used the pulpit of his weekly ABC broadcast program, "The 700 Club," to call outright for the U.S. government to assassinate Venezuelan President Chavez. Robertson said, "If he (President Chavez) thinks we are trying to assassinate him, I think we really ought to go ahead and do it….It's a whole lot cheaper than starting a war. And I don't think any oil shipments will stop."

It is the Cuban people who, over the course of nearly a half century, have volunteered in the tens of thousands to shed their blood for African liberation from the same forces who have repeatedly sought to destroy socialist Cuba, murder Dr. Fidel Castro, overthrow Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and murder U.S. political prisoners including Mumia Abu-Jamal and Assata Shakur. And according to the New Jersey newspaper, *Star Ledger*, in February this year, N.J. state police sent a representative to an international policing conference in the Dominican Republic to ask Caribbean, Central American and South American authorities for help in Shakur's capture. They explained their intention to "make sure she does not have a way to escape Cuba…."

This is why today we print comrade Assata Shakur's letter for our readers — our brothers and sisters in the U.S. Shakur's attorneys ask that you write to your congressperson and demand a reversal of these actions of the Bush administration.

All Power to the People!

Assata Letter

Continued from page 4

fact that I was acquitted or that the charges were dismissed, did not mean that I received justice in the courts, that was certainly not the case. It only meant that the "evidence" presented against me was so flimsy and false that my innocence became evident. This political persecution was part and parcel of the government's policy of eliminating political opponents by charging them with crimes and arresting them with no regard to the factual basis of such charges.

On May 2, 1973 I, along with Zayd Malik Shakur and Sundiata Acoli were stopped on the New Jersey Turnpike, supposedly for a "faulty tail light." Sundiata Acoli got out of the car to determine why we were stopped. Zayd and I remained in the car. State trooper Harper then came to the car, opened the door and began to question us. Because we were black, and riding in a car with Vermont license plates, he claimed he became "suspicious." He then drew his gun, pointed it at us, and told us to put our hands up in the air, in front of us, where he could see them. I complied and in a split second, there was a sound that came from outside the car, there was a sudden movement, and I was shot once with my arms held up in the air, and then once again from the back. Zayd Malik Shakur was later killed; trooper Werner Foerster was killed, and even though trooper Harper admitted that he shot and killed Zayd Malik Shakur, under the New Jersey felony murder law, I was charged with killing both Zayd Malik Shakur, who was my closest friend and comrade, and charged in the death of trooper Foerster.

Never in my life have I felt such grief. Zayd had vowed to protect me, and to help me to get to a safe place, and it was clear that he had lost his life, trying to protect both me and Sundiata. Although he was also unarmed, and the gun that killed trooper Foerster was found under Zayd's leg, Sundiata Acoli, who was captured later, was also charged with both deaths. Neither Sundiata Acoli nor I ever received a fair trial We were both convicted in the news media way before our trials. No news media was ever permitted to interview us, although the New Jersey police and the FBI fed stories to the press on a daily basis. In 1977, I was convicted by an all-white jury and sentenced to life plus 33 years in prison. In 1979, fearing that I would be murdered in prison, and knowing that I would never receive any justice, I was liberated from prison, aided by committed comrades who understood the depths of the injustices in my case, and who were also extremely fearful for my life.

The U.S. Senate's 1976 Church Commission report on intelligence operations inside the United States, revealed that, "The FBI has attempted covertly to influence the public's perception of persons and organizations by disseminating derogatory information to the press, either anonymously or through 'friendly' news contacts." This same policy is evidently still very much in effect today.

On December 24, 1997, the State of New Jersey called a press conference to announce that New Jersey State Police had written a letter to Pope John Paul II asking him to intervene on their behalf and to aid in having me extradited back to New Jersey prisons. The New Jersey State Police refused to make their letter public. Knowing that they had probably totally distorted the facts, and attempted to get the Pope to do the devil's work in the name of religion, I decided to write the Pope to inform him about the reality of "justice" for black people in the State of New Jersey and in the United States.

In January of 1998, during the Pope's visit to Cuba, I agreed to do an interview with NBC journalist Ralph Penza around my letter to the Pope, about my experiences in New Jersey's court system, and about the changes I saw in the United States and it's treatment of black people in the last 25 years. I agreed to do this interview because I saw this secret letter to the Pope as a vicious, vulgar, publicity maneuver on the part of the New Jersey State Police, and as a cynical attempt to manipulate Pope John Paul II.

I have lived in Cuba for many years, and was completely out of touch with the sensationalist, dishonest,

Continued on page 15

Build a New Education System

Continued from previous page

type of organization that can realize these demands.

The first step toward that reality is joining CCBPP's effort to build these programs. The Li'l Bobby Hutton Literacy Program is one step of this process. We have demonstrated it can be done. We need more organizers and more tutors and can provide training "on the job" to give you the skills needed as a volunteer tutor or program organizer. We need volunteers to set up speaking engagements about the campaign. We need more locations in different neighborhoods to run the tutoring sessions. We need writers. We need full-time volunteer organizers and part-time volunteers who are willing to commit the extra steps it takes to win.

Thirty-five years ago Dr. Huey P. Newton said that the Black Panther Party Survival Programs are like a life raft - a survival kit that sustains you when you are stranded out at sea until you reach the shore, until you can gain your liberation against the forces of reaction. Understanding that, make your next step a call to the Commemoration Committee for the Black Panther Party at 510-652-7170. Get involved and help to create a real educational system for our children.

All Power to the People!

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CCBPP Joins Seattle BPP Legacy Conference

On May 14, a delegation from Commemoration Committee for the Black Panther Party (CCBPP) delivered news of CCBPP accomplishments and distributed the latest issue of The Commemorator at a day-long session of speakers and workshops attended by 400 youth and scores of community members of all ages in Seattle, Washington, titled "Why the Legacy of the Seattle Chapter of the Black Panther Party is Important." The event was led by former members and founders of the Seattle BPP chapter, of which CCBPP Chairman Melvin Dickson had been a member and cadre. CCBPP Advisory Board member, James Mattson, traveled to Seattle with Dickson to participate in this forum, held at Seattle's Garfield Community Center.

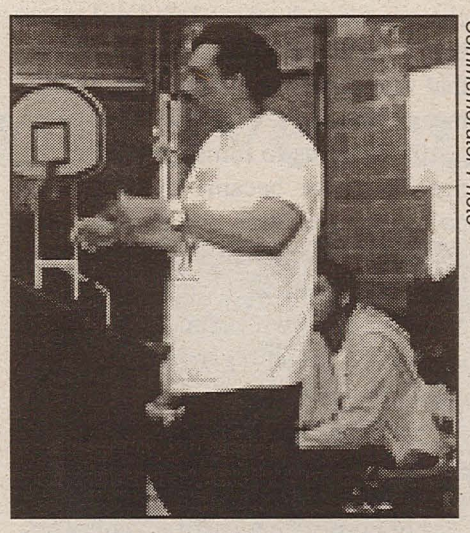
The gathering featured those who could testify from personal experience to the valuable contributions made by the Seattle BPP chapter within their community. A film series of historical BPP films conducted at the University of Washington the day before the May 14 forum was attended by 4,000 students. The program and film series were organized by Central House (CD), a non-profit group, coordinated by former BPP members Aaron Dixon, Elmer Dixon, Michael Dixon, Valentine Hobbs, Ron Johnson and other former Seattle former members.

The events marked the 37th anniversary of the founding of the Seattle BPP chapter and were inspired by Central House. They have organized a non-profit media-literacy program for Seattle high school's youth of color over the past two years. The group has organized transitional housing programs for troubled students from three Seattle high schools in the Central District (a low-income and working class community). Central House was founded and coordinated by Aaron Dixon, founder of the original Seattle BPP Chapter.

Aaron Dixon recently told *The Commemorator,* "one of our immediate objectives is to restore some of the history through the building the BPP historical landmarks in Seattle's central district, where we organized positive programs, a vital part of the history of this country."

The result of the Seattle BPP commemorative weekend events was a collaborative effort of former Panthers and these youth groups, that are currently sponsoring a regular BPP historical movie series. With *The Commemorator,* Seattle youth are now determined to study the political legacy of the BPP, seeking lessons they could apply to today's conditions of struggle.

Assembled in workshops, forum participants expressed great interest in learning methods for building community-based survival programs independent of government monies, ending police brutality and freeing U.S. political prisoners. CCBPP leaders were able to point to what CCBPP has been building for the last 15 years, particularly the growth of *The Commemorator* newspaper and its expanding national circulation as well as CCBPP's literacy programs. "These are material examples of tactics that both meet survival needs of the people and advance the strength of political organization. This combination is essential to bringing about the kind of systemic political and economic changes needed to make the BPP Ten-Point Program a reality," explained Dickson.



Commemorator Photo

Elmer Dixon, founding member of the BPP's Washington State Chapter in Seattle, addressed the conference.

Commemorator Photo

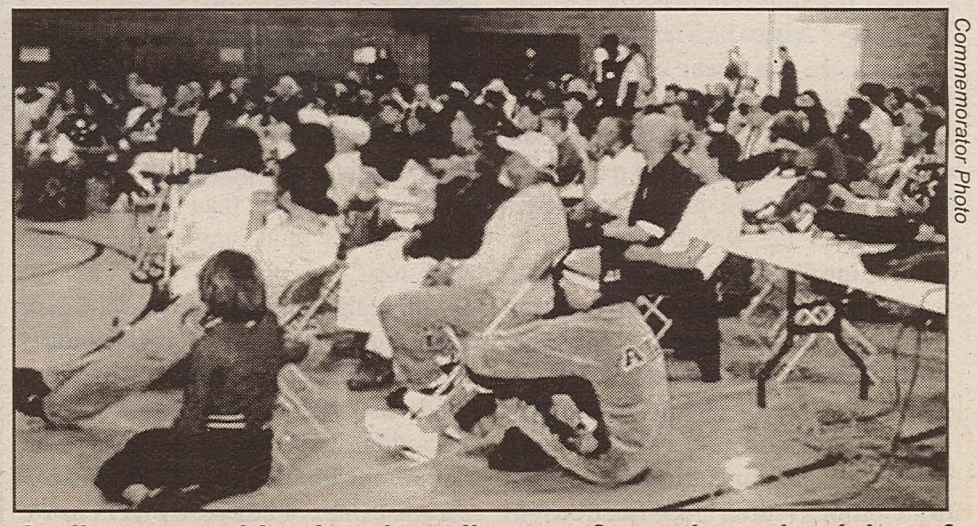
Aaron Dixon made introductory comments at the chapter's 37th reunion program at Seattle's Garfield Center on May 14, 2005, where featured speakers and former Panthers spoke on the history and lessons gained to more than 400 Seattle youth who attended the conference.

The CCBPP delegation circulated 200 copies of the May 2005 edition of *The Commemorator* at the event while talking with people individually to generate new volunteer correspondents and distributors of the paper. Melvin Dickson told many interested participants about the 15-year history of building *The Commemorator* through organizing volunteers and community support into an independent association that can carry out campaigns, provide political analysis, publicize political actions, produce and distribute its own publication and develop its own survival programs. "We seek to act as a vehicle for continuing the fight to achieve the goals of the BPP Ten-Point Program," Dickson added.

One of the speakers at the May 14 gathering, Jake Fiddler, a former BPP member, spoke to a full audience in the gymnasium, working up and engaging the largely youthful crowd about the principles of the Black Panther Party. He explained the basic principles of organizing, "You used what you got to get what you need. That's how we did it! We did not sit back and criticize."

Dickson pointed out to attendants and participants how CCBPP has specifically put that principle into action in recent years through the production of *The Commemorator* and through the establishment of the Li'l Bobby Hutton Literacy Campaign.

Fiddler talked about the many historic BPP positive programs, such as the free breakfast for children program that fed hundreds of children each school day. Fiddler described BPP's liberation school that provided political education and historical lessons to many young people while also educating them in basic reading and writing skills. He recounted how the BPP Sickle Cell Anemia campaign not only screened thousands of members of the black community but also provided an example for the nation in detection and treatment of this deadly disease.



Commemorator Photo

A diverse multi-cultural audience of youth and adults of attended the commemorative program.

Former Panthers discussed how even though the BPP survival programs were very popular in the community and served day-to-day needs, that did not deter the work of counter-intelligence. Actions by law enforcement, from the FBI to local police, along with poverty pimps, eventually led to the death or incarceration of many dedicated party members.

Elmer Dixon, a founding member of the Seattle Chapter, also spoke. "Many times community members came out in the defense of the party when the Party came under attack. Often 'members' were not even formal members, but they were members of the neighborhood and the larger Seattle community. They were what we called our 'secret' army whose job was to defend the Party's facilities when they came under attack by the pigs. So when the pigs came to attack us the community and neighbors were there to defend our facilities, and they had to back off. They called their reinforcements — we called ours!" Dixon received a big round of applause.

After the main program at the Garfield Center, workshops were held in different rooms, where former BPP members spoke on a variety of topics, such as the "Community Survival Program," "Police Brutality," and "Political Prisoners." Dickson enlisted a volunteer note-taker from the audience in order to cover the story of what was happening for *The Commemorator* readership.

Bobby Seale, Keynote Speaker

The keynote speaker, Bobby Seale, Black Panther Party co-founder, was introduced as the audience gave him a standing ovation. "The heroes were all the people that did the hard work," stated Seale.

Seale explained how he and Huey Newton spent much of the early days of the Party imprisoned. Seale then went on to explain the scientific method that he and Huey would often lecture party members on after their release from prison in 1971. "The Black Panther Party applied the science of revolutionary humanism to practice, through the survival programs and the day-to-day struggle in the black ghetto," Seale explained. "One of my favorite concepts was that a quantitative increase brings about a qualitative transformation. But you have to break that down so that the brothers and sisters on the street would understand. I often would break it down after Huey's speeches, so that the rank and file brothers and sisters could understand some of the basic principles of science that Huey taught about.

"The Seattle chapter was the first Black Panther chapter organized outside of California. The Seattle chapter was dynamic and profound, with their survival programs, free breakfast programs, free ambulance program, free pest control program, free medical clinic program," stated Seale.

Emory Douglas
BPP Minister of Culture

Emory Douglas, former BPP Minister of Culture and the BPP lead revolutionary artist from the 1960s up to the early 1980s, presented some of his work from the BPP era on a slide

Continued on page 17

My History in the Black Panther Party

By Melvin Dickson

My history with the Black Panther Party began with the Seattle, Washington chapter in 1969 and has come full circle with the program of the Commemoration Committee of the Black Panther Party (CCBPP), which we have been able to build using some of the successful aspects of what the BPP had accomplished and applying the lessons of that history to today's struggles. Being able to bring the successes of the CCBPP program and *The Commemorator* back to Seattle and tell the story there to hundreds of young people, eager to learn, as well as the elders who are still in the struggle, is a step in the continuation of our goals.

On August 24, 1969, Asali Dickson and I departed from Oakland, California for Seattle to join the BPP chapter there. We had recently married and were intent on joining the chapter there. This was Asali's first time leaving home to live away from her parents and family. After I contacted a friend from Oakland, who'd been hired as a mechanic by Boeing in Seattle, we moved to Seattle.

For the next three years, Asali and I volunteered with the Seattle chapter's free breakfast programs. We sold Black Panther newspapers, and participated in the day-to-day political life of the Party. After months of volunteering, daily political education classes and training, we eventually joined and became Party cadre.

The BPP practical and political program included canvassing Seattle's low-income minority neighborhoods, selling *The Black Panther* newspapers, volunteering in free breakfast programs, setting up political education classes, house meetings and standing security at our headquarters. There was also weekly technical training consisting of breaking down, cleaning and reassembling weapons for the defense of our headquarters and homes when they were under attack. We were determined to lead our poor communities, and were afraid for our lives.

We began to build community support by organizing local businesses to donate funds and food for BPP community survival programs. When large businesses such as Safeway refused to donate, we picketed and boycotted them. Numerous times cadre were assigned to stand security 24/7 at local supporters homes. Numerous supporters were harassed by police officers.

Police officers made it a point to find out the first name of each party member or cadre. One morning, after leaving BPP headquarters, a police officer pulled up alongside of me in his patrol car at a stoplight and said, "Hey Melvin! I see you're going to the campus, today. I'll see you later." I never responded to them. Other times, police officers would tail us with the patrol car's headlight on high beam, zeroed in on our vehicle to let us know that they were watching.

We also, out of necessity, organized legal and medical support groups with volunteers, including students from the University of Washington and the community college. They joined us with an understanding of the need to defend the community against police harassment and attacks.

By and large, we got used to officers, and went about our business as though they were not there until we made it back to headquarters. There we felt relatively safe and secure, with sandbags circling the walls and peepholes that provided enough view to scope the activities outside our office. Our headquarters was constantly encircled by police and government agents in unmarked cars and helicopters overhead.

This was before we learned about the dangers of premature concentration and unfettered rhetoric. Our tactics then were daring, but we lost control of them. Now we have learned from the mistakes our leaders (cadre) paid a great price for.

After becoming a full member, a cadre, I was given the assignment by Captain Aaron Dixon to coordinate and direct Seattle chapter finances and the distribution and circulation of the BPP newspaper in the Seattle-Tacoma area. These were my official areas of responsibility throughout the time I spent in Seattle. During my tenure as the financial director, the chapter purchased a bus for the free transportation to prison program. This program was designed to make sure that inmates were in touch with families, friends and loved ones.

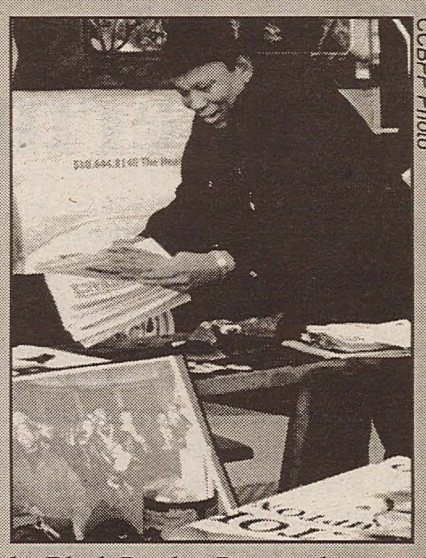
We purchased an office facility to use for our headquarters, expanded the free breakfast program from two to four programs running throughout Seattle in low-income neighborhoods. We also rented a facility for the Sidney Miller free medical clinic — today, it is the Carolyn Down clinic (a former member) in a low-income neighborhood in Seattle. There we screened members of the black community for Sickle Cell Anemia and provided education and a testing program. This program was led by Leon "Valentine" Hobbs who, after we raised funds, bought an electrophoresis machine at a big discount. The machine was used to test the red blood cells that would determine if one had the sickle cell trait or not.

In May 2005, I returned to the neighborhood where I had officially joined the Party, with my longtime friend James Mattson, a former BPP volunteer and a CCBPP board member. The two of us promoted and circulated *The Commemorator* newspaper throughout our visit, to help make the 37th anniversary forum into a truly commemorative event.

One of the first people I ran into was a longtime comrade, Leon "Valentine" Hobbs, a former cadre from Washington DC, currently living in Seattle. "Valentine" was rapping with three or four youths who were wearing BPP T-shirts. When I first arrived in Seattle in 1969, Valentine was one of the first Seattle Panthers I met.

Our eyes met and I said "Valentine! What's up?" Leon replied, "Melvin Dickson! It's good to see you," as though the 33 years since we'd last seen one another were just yesterday. Valentine continued, "I'm trying to explain to these young folks how we used to do it. These schools aren't teaching nothing about history. You know youngsters today are miseducated. They know nothing about history."

"But there is potential here, Valentine," I replied. "They are young, energetic, and curious about



CCBPP Photo

the Black Panther Party and we need to pass on the lessons of what worked and didn't work. We need to tell it like it is. Most activists I meet today, with their narrow protest agenda, don't have a clue about organizing the community. We have to teach these youth what it really takes and how to win."

With the attention of the young people, who were standing and listening, I continued. "Although, back then we were arrogant and overconfident, we did not just protest — we organized day-to-day. We used to call that 'serving the people, body and soul,' and that's how we understood '24/7' back then."

Valentine picked it up, and asked "Who said, 'Each one teaches one?' Who said, 'while a picture is worth a thousand words, action is supreme?' Who said, 'Principles and goals never change, only tactics change?'" That was the BPP.

Now we must materially dedicate ourselves to build the apparatus needed to lead the struggle to unite workers and low-income communities of all races, colors, national orgins of all economic strata. This is why, today, CCBPP is using tactics that are drawn from the lessons of history, to achieve the same principles and goals from almost 40 years ago. I was glad to have the opportunity to begin introducing CCBPP to interested youth in Seattle, and now we need to build the kind of movement that can realize BPP goals at the point of practice. Call CCBPP at 510-652-7170 about committing to an organizer training program.

All power to the people!

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International Update

Elections in Haiti

Papering Over an Illegal Situation

by the Haiti Action Committee

"There is a growing consensus that there can be no free and fair elections in Haiti under the violent conditions that exist today. Nevertheless, the interim government is determined to hold elections in November of this year, despite rampant violence and the continuing imprisonment of Lavalas party leaders. Under these circumstances, it is hard to believe that the Haitian people would ever accept the results of the elections."

— Congresswoman Maxine Waters, August 23, 2005

We are inclined to believe that elections are a key step in creating democracy. Yet the United States government has used rigged elections as an instrument to maintain control and domination for many years. In their 1984 book, *Demonstration Elections: U.S.-Staged Elections in the Dominican Republic, Vietnam, and El Salvador,* Edward S. Herman and Frank Brodhead explain the manipulative use of such elections to:

"oppose and defeat popular movements"

"ratify ongoing U.S. intervention strategies" and

"reassure the U.S. home population" that the latest Washington-backed foreign war is justified.

Recent Elections in Haiti

In 1990, Haitian voters elected Jean-Bertrand Aristide as president with a 2/3 majority, in the first free election with universal suffrage in Haiti's history. Aristide, a populist priest and outspoken advocate for the poorest of the poor, demanded a "place at the table" for all Haitians. He was promptly overthrown by a military coup in September 1991 (then restored to power by a U.S.-led international force in 1994.)

The movement led by President Aristide, called Lavalas, won elections for president in 1995, and then in 2000, under the banner of the Fanmi Lavalas Party, when Aristide was elected overwhelmingly for the second time in the first democratic successions in Haiti's history. Despite his enormous popularity with the majority of Haiti's people, the United States government and the Haitian elite did everything possible after the election to discredit Aristide and Lavalas, including economic sabotage, aid embargo, funding the tiny opposition which had little popular support, and fighting to prevent the holding of any future elections, because it was clear that Lavalas would win.

The Overthrow of Constitutional Democracy

Finally a U.S.-supported paramilitary force of former army officers and death squad members occupied northern Haiti in early 2004, and the U.S. military kidnapped President Aristide and forced him into exile on February 29. The U.S., French, and Canadian governments installed an occupation government, led by Gérard Latortue, and the U.N. Security Council authorized a "peacekeeping" force, which entered Haiti in June, 2004.

Courtesy of Haiti Action Committee

Haiti: Unarmed masses join a spring demonstration for the Fanmi Lavalas Party.

In spite of a mandate to protect the people of Haiti, U.N. forces have allied themselves with the Haitian elites to destroy the Lavalas movement. They have been complicit in murderous attacks by Haitian police and paramilitaries on leaders of Lavalas and on the poor neighborhoods that support Lavalas. More than 1000 Lavalas activists and leaders have been imprisoned without charges. Thousands have been killed, and many thousands more live in hiding, unable to be with, or work to support, their families.

"Demonstration" Elections

In this context the United Nations called for "demonstration" elections to show the world that all is well in Haiti, while at the same time stacking the deck against Lavalas. In the last general election there were more than 11,000 registration centers, but in an August 2 report, the London-based Catholic Institute for International Relations wrote that this number ". . . has been slashed to less than 500 for the 2005 elections. This raises concerns about the ability of those living in rural areas to participate, as they have to walk much further or pay to reach the registration centres by bus. The location of the registration centres also appears to favour the wealthier urban voter and potential government supporter."

Reports out of Port-au-Prince vary as to the number of voters registered from a high of 2.5 million to a low figure of 870,000 out of a potential 4.5 million eligible voters. Abner Francois, director of the National Organization for the Defense of Youth (ORNADEJ), told Haitian media on August 23, that those living in traditionally pro-Lavalas districts such as Solino, Bel-Air, Delmas 2, Sans-Fil, and Cité Soleil, found it impossible to register due to the absence of voter registration offices. Yet there were three centres in the upper class suburb of Petionville.

The Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti noted, "Many of those who registered stated that they did so because registration is required for the national identity card and that they have no intention to vote." Procuring identity papers in Haiti normally requires a fee; as there are no such fees associated with registering to vote, there is an obvious financial incentive to do so for the desperately poor majority of Haitians.

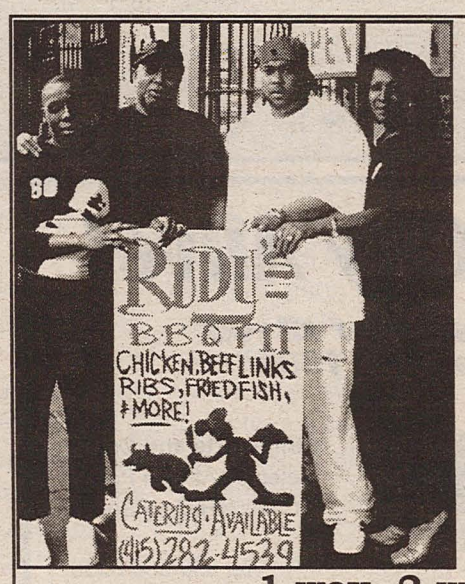
The Official Fanmi Lavalas Party

Why are the U.S., Canada, France, and the U.N. so determined to hold elections now, in this current state of chaos and repression, when they fought so hard to prevent elections while Aristide was president?

The goal of these elections is not to elect a representative government chosen by the people of Haiti, but rather to legitimize the ongoing process to eliminate Lavalas as a national movement and to demonstrate popular support for the candidate hand-picked by the United States government. When Lavalas refuses to participate, the pro-election forces can cast them as the bad guys who are trying to prevent "free elections."

Unfortunately, the corporate media offers no context for those unfamiliar with Haiti's electoral history to understand otherwise. Instead, the media gives voice to the paramilitary invective against the poor, calling them "bandits" and "rats." It refuses to acknowledge that the majority of Haitians demand the return of President Aristide, because he built schools, parks, and health clinics, and fully recognized Creole and voodoo, the language and religion of the poor — reforms that, until the coup, enabled them truly to participate in building Haitian democracy.

In El Salvador and Vietnam the opposition parties "were completely excluded from the ballot by law and/or the very real threats of murder." The same process is occurring in Haiti today, as USAID plots to eliminate Lavalas from the body politic, and the murderous police force hacks Lavalas supporters to death with machetes. While in Haiti, Aristide "could do no right," as his besieged presidency struggled to support the interests of the poor majority. Now the illegal coup government receives total international support, as it imprisons and slaughters pro-democracy activists, who have twice elected the man they want to be president in truly free elections. Any free society would consider elections a sham in which members of the most popular party cannot campaign because of threats of imprisonment or death, and such is the state of "demonstration" elections in Haiti today.



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Katrina

Continued from page 2

But FEMA left us in the cold to die. They could have easily helped. They did not want to help. And when they finally returned they split up the families." Mitchell explained that he has a family he left behind: a mother, a sister, a brother and a stepfather who were separated by government officials. He was sent to Siloan Springs but he does not know where the rest of his family is.

Systemic Nature of Problem Under Capitalism

Major corporations that had offices or headquarters in New Orleans got their people and materials out, relocated themselves to other cities and were up and running in new facilities in surrounding cities by day seven.

Four days after Katrina hit, hundreds of thousands were now homeless – and thousands dead. When National Guard troops finally began to arrive in New Orleans, they delivered some food and water to those trapped in the Super Dome, but far from an adequate supply. Hurricane victims assumed more would be coming – many did not fathom how little their government is concerned whether they live or die. And when the National Guard returned, they were armed, supposedly to defend the Guard itself against bands of looters with handguns and rifles.

Soon after, it became clear that the National Guard's orders were to lock down the Super Dome and prevent anyone from leaving. They locked the Super Dome and set-up checkpoints along the roads leading out of New Orleans to turn back anyone trying to escape the destruction.

Why? They assumed that anyone leaving the Super Dome at that point was going to loot.

The official federal policy in effect evidenced total disregard for the travesty and utter horror taking place inside the dome: tens of thousands of people were crowded together, with no food, no medicine, no potable water, no working toilets or any means to maintain sanitation. Urine and feces covered the floor; bodies of the dead and dying were everywhere. To stay inside the Super Dome under these conditions was an absolute health risk. Only a handful of totally stressed medical personnel were on the scene, desperately trying to help the sick and dying – they were not provided with adequate supplies, despite the massive stockpiles of emergency equipment and supplies under federal control that could have been transported in to the disaster victims.

The government's priority and policy was made crystal clear for all Americans and the world to see: the government moved to protect property over saving peoples' lives; and in the midst of unimaginable human suffering of the tens of thousands of people inside the Super Dome alone, they refused to act to fill the needs of those people.

When bulk shipments of food, water, and medical supplies finally began to arrive from other parts of the U.S., and even from other countries, FEMA more often than not refused to allow them to be off-loaded. Eyewitness accounts are documenting how trucks and other vehicles with food, ice, water, clothing and other relief supplies were rerouted again and again, never to be delivered to those in most need. FEMA gave orders on setting up communication lines that resulted in cutting the communication lines that tied emergency workers together.

By day three of no rescue operations, no supplies, and no aid, the death, despair, and anger rose. Instead of moving to correct mistakes and fill the needs of the population, the government – with the full backing of the prostituted mainstream press – went full scale into dramatized horror about black looters and snipers.

Everyone who had been corralled into the Super Dome and convention center, and who were now hungry, thirsty, sick and hurt, had to undergo body searches by armed guards before they were allowed onto the trucks or helicopters that did finally come for a relative handful.

There were too few trucks, buses and helicopters trickling in and out and for days to come, thousands still could not get out. Yet, people with money who were in a hotel next to the Super Dome were given an armed guard escort to be put ahead of the line, onto the buses, without the body searches and without waiting among the masses who had been stranded in the filthy, diseased "shelters."

And when these more affluent, mainly white people were seen earlier by reporters leaving their hotel buildings in downtown New Orleans and breaking into the stores across the street to steal necessities for themselves, they were characterized by the press as "stranded" people who had "found" urgently needed supplies – they were not reported to be criminals and thieves, as were the poor and people of color who engaged in the same activities.

Miscommunications? Ineptitude? Inefficiency? Lack of planning? All of the above? Yes, but much more. What happened is a mirror of ongoing, standing policy and priorities of the government bodies of this potentially great nation. Deliberate, calculated and deadly for poor and working class families.

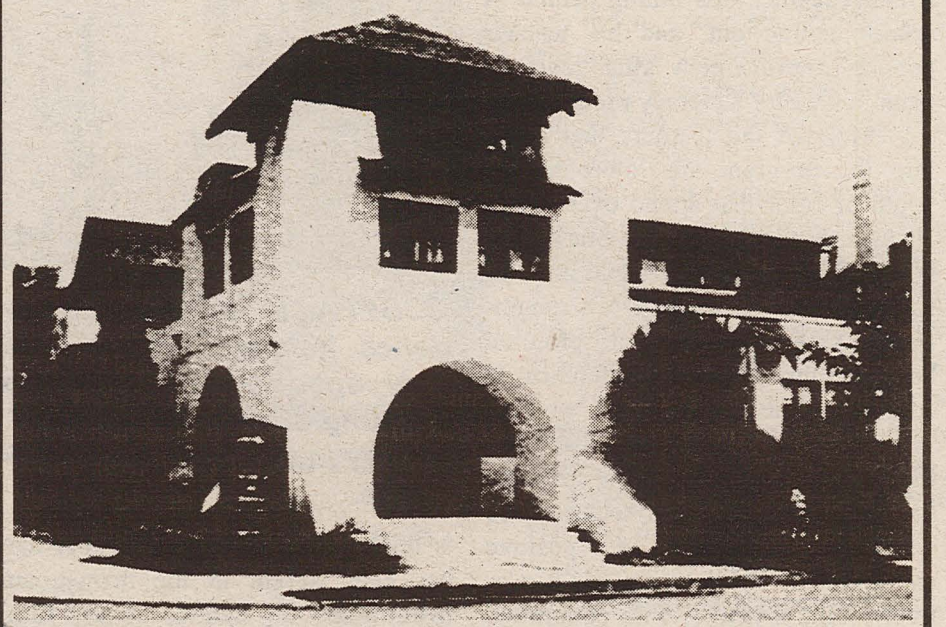
The government could have ordered trains, buses, planes or other means of transportation to get in there and take everyone on board immediately, and gotten everyone out of harm's way before the storm hit the coast. The government could have ordered a swarm of Huey copters and columns of high water level Humvees to be there in hours and gotten everyone out in a day after the flood waters did inundated the area. They could have, but they did not.

We are the U.S. of A, our government can and does invade third world countries and take control of them with lightning speed and efficiency. We have more than 400 billionaires living in this country alone. We have a massive "Homeland Security" agency. We have thousands of hotels and apartment buildings with vacancies in every major city. Not only were no orders given to utilize any of these resources for the people, but immediate offers of aid from other countries, that could have been used to save lives, were refused by the U.S. government.

Immediately after Katrina hit New Orleans and a total of 90,000 square miles of the Gulf coast, Cuba offered

Continued on page 15

South Berkeley Community Church: Historic Monument



On October 19, 2005, the historic South Berkeley Community Church (SBCC), located at 1802 Fairview Street, kicked off its Capital Restoration Campaign. This church is a City of Berkeley landmark, No. 13. It was designed by Hugo Storch in 1912, and was historically in the forefront of civil rights and social justice movements. The event was sponsored by the Berkeley Architectural heritage Association's John Beach Memorial Lecture Fund. Among the distinguished guests that evening were past Council Member, the Honorable Maudelle Shirek, who was also a Sunday School teacher when SBCC was formed in 1943; Dr. Ruth Nicols, wife of the late Bishop Roy Nicols who was the organizing pastor of SBCC along with Rev. Buell Gallagher (Rev. Nicols went on to become the first African American Bishop in the Methodist Church), and Max Anderson, current Council Member.

Longtime member Leona Martin, who is the Chair of the Campaign, welcomed and introduced guest speakers, Susan Dinkelspiel Cemy, Historian and Author, and Architectural Historian Bradley Wiedmaier. Ms. Cemy gave an account of the South Berkeley neighborhood in its early days. Mr. Wiedmaier gave a historical account of Architect Hugo Storch's works.

SBCC was established in 1943 as the first interracial congregation in Berkeley, if not in the West. It came together during the War Years as many African American families migrated north to work in the Richmond shipyards. The congregation showed leadership and courage at a time when integration was not considered acceptable, even in Berkeley.

Presently the church serves the community through its Sunday worship, a program that provides a free midday meal every Thursday, a Friday evening children's art and dinner program, and is host to the Little Bobby Hutton Saturday tutoring program and the Resurrection Community Church. Its current pastor, the Rev. M. Gayle Dickson, believes that the "Restoration of the church is important for its members to continue working on this corner in the upbuilding of all God's people no matter their race, creed or class."

For information on how you might contribute to this church's legacy, please call 510-652-1040.

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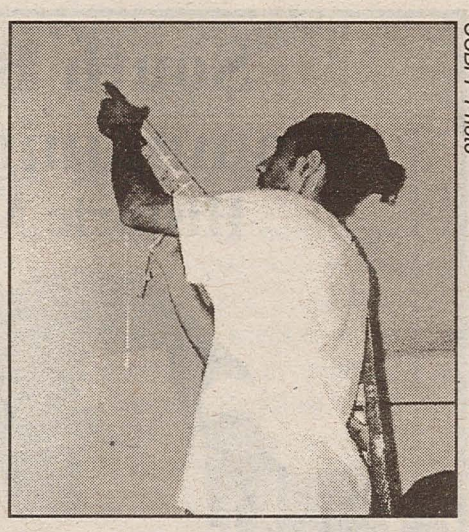
CCBPP Expands

Continued from page 1

risk of being placed in remedial classes was able to pass his school tests as a result of his participation in our program. Another learner was falling behind in school, acting out, and his teacher noticed improvement after involvement in CCBPP's literacy program.

"Most of the learners that come into the program are lower-income youth of color that attend overcrowded, underfunded schools. Public school teachers are not able to spend individual time with the students to strengthen their skills, but our literacy program does, and this makes the difference. In addition to the literacy skills we provide learners, I think we also offer them community. We strive to make the program a safe and secure place where people can learn in a positive environment. The program has a relatively solid structure, with committed tutors and volunteers in regards to the training program and the overall weekly program. However, there are things that should be improved and what we need most of all is more committed volunteer staff to do it."



CCBPP Photo

CCBPP volunteer Anthony Jones helping renovate the new space. Jones is also painting murals of BPP history in CCBPP's new work space.

CCBPP Photo

Many members of the Abdullah-Mohammad Family of North Oakland take part in the Li'l Bobby Hutton Literacy Campaign. The seven youngest children are all learners. Older siblings come with their parents and assist with supervision.

Li'l Bobby Hutton Literacy Program – the Road to Liberation

Pam Thomas, who has been volunteering with the program almost a year, is now the lead tutor for the campaign, coordinating the recruitment, training and scheduling of other tutors. Thomas brings to the Literacy Program a particular focus on African American History as it relates to the historical fight of the BPP against both racial discrimination and class oppression inside the United States. Pam said, "In addition to our lesson plans that include the basic literacy training, such as phonics, spelling, vocabulary, sentence structuring, writing and basic arithmetic, we have now added computer literacy to better equip our students to deal with the real environment.

"Our Literacy program manifests the idea that it is important to expose the lies and mindset that the Jim Crow institutions in this country continue to promote, from top to bottom, since the inception of this country. So the first step in liberating our people, since we operate from the principle that literacy is liberation, is to provide history that has been absent in the mainstream institutions, the school books, film, etc. This, for many of our people is fundamentally needed, because this history provides a careful examination of America and its policies and actions that affect the world today."

"My goal, as the lead tutor coordinator," Pam explained, "is to ensure that our students develop their capacity and become critical thinkers, that is, 'not what to think, but how to think.' Point number Five of the BPP Ten-Point Program is relevant to all people today, because it teaches about oneself in relation to the world around us, and this is the opposite of the lies and stereotypes that have been, and are currently taught, in most of the white, capitalist-dominant institutions in this country.

"For instance," Pam continued, "when Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans, populated mostly by poor people who are over 80% black, the media coverage could not hide the poor black masses of people who were abandoned by the government to die, who had no food and no water, and were trying desperately to get what they could from the stores to survive. But what did the capitalist media do? They portrayed them as 'looters and criminals,' while the few whites who took things from the same store were not portrayed as looters and criminals but were portrayed as simply taking the things they needed. On top of that, the media did not show how the government prioritized providing protection to the rich people and their property over saving the lives of the poor. So they aren't teaching us about the real world around us. We have to teach the truth, and through this, I see a brighter future. Within this context, today's youth will become tomorrow's leaders."

"Li'l Bobby Hutton is a symbol of overcoming the odds set against him by forces he had nothing to do with, which are the same forces set against the poor and working people throughout the world," said CCBPP Chairman Melvin Dickson. "Li'l Bobby Hutton was the first member to join the BPP and he taught himself to read as many other members did."

Today, access to real information about the truth of what is going on in our communities and the world is needed like never before. Independent news publications that are produced by people involved in the actual work of addressing the real problems of the population, who can circulate the publication to people throughout the community, person by person, independent of any corporate or government control or ulteriorly motivated interests, provide hope for those who recognize the need for real change.

"That is the purpose of *The Commemorator* newspaper. In the process of circulating the newspaper, CCBPP volunteers recognized that many people were eager to get news of what is really going on in our communities as well as learn the legacy and history of the Black Panther Party, founded nearly 40 years ago. The problem was that many of the people could not read at a level to comprehend the strategic points of the organization. So the need for the Li'l Bobby Literacy Campaign grew out of our struggle, just as Li'l Bobby's struggle to learn to read grew out of the struggle of the BPP in the 1960's,

CCBPP is expanding. We need people to step forward and help take responsibility for the future of our world. We provide free on-the-job training to anyone who wants to learn to change the conditions in our communities. If you are interested in full-time volunteer organizing, or part-time organizing or an internship, we can offer you an organizer training program in how to make systemic change. Call CCBPP at 510-652-7170.

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Katrina

Continued from page 13

medical and humanitarian aid. Just hours away and with the world's most advanced, trained and equipped corps of medical doctors, with a track record of saving lives in poor and developing countries and with extensive disaster relief experience, Cuba notified the U.S. government that they had over 1500 experienced doctors – many of them specialists – packed and ready to travel to the U.S. to volunteer their medical skills and to arrive with tons of desperately needed medical supplies.

They could have arrived within hours once given the go-ahead from the federal government. But the Bush administration both refused Cuban humanitarian aid and failed to provide aid to the hurricane victims itself.

In his September 4 speech in Havana, Cuban President Fidel Castro, explaining to the assembled and awaiting doctors, why they had not yet been dispatched, even though they had offered their aid to the U.S. government and had been ready to go since September 2, noted, "It was clear to us that those who faced the greatest danger were these huge numbers of poor, desperate people, many elderly citizens with health situations, pregnant women, mothers and children among them, all in urgent need of medical care.

"In such a situation, regardless of how rich a country may be, the number of scientists it has or how great its technical breakthroughs have been, what it needs are young, well-trained and experienced professionals, who have done medical work in anomalous circumstances, and that, with a minimum of resources, can be immediately transported by air or any other available means to specific facilities or sites where the lives of human beings are in danger."

Members of the U.S. Congressional Hispanic Caucus "urged" President George W. Bush to accept an offer from the Cuban government to send this brigade of 1,586 doctors, together with 36 tons of health supplies, to help attend to the victims of Hurricane Katrina, stating that they expect the government to take the necessary steps for implementing an effective response, including immediately accepting help from other nations. Yet the U.S. government never even responded to the Cuban offer.

Cuba itself is experienced in successfully preventing the loss of life in severe hurricane disasters. Last year when Hurricane Ivan, a Category 5 hurricane, aimed for Cuba, 1.5 million Cuban people were led by their government in a massive mobilization that relocated them out of harm's way. How did they do it? They used every bus, truck and car they had. Not a single person died in Cuba when Ivan struck, even though 20,000 homes were destroyed. The reflection of the difference in response by our own government is staggering – the demonstration by this tiny but firmly socialist government puts the U.S. to shame.

The government again, as it has with every administration in office at the time of every crisis they have created, put their own political interests at odds with the urgent necessities of the American people. It is against their financial interests to hold anything but a hostile relationship of constant threat and attack toward poor and working class populations – both at home in the south and within Cuba, a nation that puts people's needs first as policy, as their duty and as their right.

Don't Wait, Organize!

Whatever spin they try to put on it now, whatever they say about what they "will" do to "rebuild better than ever" – our evidence is clear in their material actions toward the poorest members of our society.

Follow the money trail. What the feds did do, within days of the disaster, was to grant some $500 million in no-bid contracts to a subsidiary of Halliburton to build new sports arenas in the disaster zone. New Orleans presents a gold mine for developers who will not allow that city to be home again for a population of which 30% exists at poverty level.

In the face of history and indisputable facts, we cannot wait and "hope" that the government and government-affiliated agencies, such as the American Red Cross or FEMA, just need time to "pull themselves together" to provide the resources needed to bring about full economic recovery for those whose lives that have been destroyed.

There is no evidence, no historical precedent, that tells us that this government is ever going to protect the low-income and working people of this nation, much less do what is necessary to restore the lives of those it just allowed to be destroyed by the federal government's own malfeasance and inaction.

The people of the rest of the world in developed and developing nations alike are horrified by the demonstration of hostility and neglect toward its own people displayed by this so-called "democratic" government. They are appalled at the lack of any evacuation aid to protect the people from destructive battering and its aftermath. They have gotten a glimpse at the level of poverty U.S. citizens were living in before the hurricane disaster.

What must now be even more clear for us – the U.S. working people, the poor, black, white, red, brown or yellow – is that if we do not get busy and build our own organizations of self-help and reconstruction, we will be criminalized, dispersed, abandoned, scapegoated and pitted against each other in a never-ending pattern of divide and conquer.

We Must Unite and Organize!

If you know anyone in the disaster zones, or from areas where victims are now refugees, or if you know anyone who is or wants to start organizing relief and aid, volunteers and resources, please put them in touch with The Commemorator so we can get the word out to people who can help.

If you know anyone who needs help, put them in touch with us so we can find out where and how help can be gotten to them. And come in to the CCBPP office now to learn how to organize.

Join with us to build the day-to-day programs and stable organization required for serving the people – body and soul – that is so obviously needed today. Call 510-652-7170.

All Power to the People!

Assata Letter

Continued from page 9

nature of the U.S. establishment media today. It is worse today than it was 30 years ago. After years of being victimized by the "establishment" media, it was naive of me to hope that I might finally get the opportunity to tell "my side of the story." Instead of an interview with me, what took place was a "staged media event" in three parts, full of distortions, inaccuracies and outright lies. NBC purposely misrepresented the facts. Not only did NBC spend thousands of dollars promoting this "exclusive interview series" on NBC, they also spent a great deal of money advertising this "exclusive interview" on black radio stations and also placed notices in local newspapers.

Distortions and Lies in the NBC Series

In what can only be called deliberate deception and slander, NBC aired a photograph of a woman with a gun in her hand implying that the woman in the photograph was me. I was not, in fact, the woman in the photograph. The photograph was taken from a highly publicized case where I was accused of bank robbery. Not only did I voluntarily insist on participating in a lineup, during which witnesses selected another woman, but during the trial, several witnesses, including the manager of the bank, testified that the woman in that photograph was not me. I was acquitted of that bank robbery. NBC aired that photograph on at least 5 different occasions, representing the woman in the photograph as me. How is it possible that the New Jersey State Police, who claim to have a detective working full time on my case, Governor of New Jersey Christine Whitman, who claimed she reviewed all the "evidence," or NBC, which has an extensive research department, did not know that the photograph was false? It was a vile, fraudulent attempt to make me look guilty. NBC deliberately misrepresented the truth. Even after many people had called in, and there was massive fax, and e-mail campaign protesting NBC's mutilation of the facts, Ralph Penza and NBC continued to broadcast that photograph, representing it as me. Not once have the New Jersey State Police, Governor Christine Whitman, or NBC come forth and stated that I was not the woman in the photograph, or that I had been acquitted of that charge.

Another major lie and distortion was that we had left trooper Werner Foerster on the roadside to die. The truth is that there was a major cover-up as to what happened on May 2, 1973. Trooper Harper, the same man who shot me with my arms raised in the air, testified that he returned to the State Police Headquarters, which was less than 200 yards away, "to seek aid." However, tape recordings and police reports made on May 2, 1973 prove that not only did Trooper Harper give several conflicting statements about what happened on the turnpike, but he never once mentioned the name of Werner Foerster, or the fact that the incident took place right in front of the Trooper Headquarters. In an effort to hide his tracks and cover his guilt he said nothing whatsoever about Foerster to his superiors or to his fellow officers.

In a clear attempt to discredit me, Col. Carl Williams of the New Jersey State Police was allowed to give blow-by-blow distortions of my interview. In my interview, I stated that on the night of May 2, 1973 I was shot with my arms in the air, then shot again in the back. Williams stated "that is absolutely false. Our records show that she reached in my pocketbook, pulled out a nine millimeter weapon and started firing." However, the claim that I reached into my pocketbook and pulled out a gun, while inside the car was even contested by trooper Harper. Although on three official reports, and when he testified before the grand jury he stated that he saw me take a gun out of my pocketbook, he finally admitted under cross-examination that he never saw me with my hands in a pocketbook, never saw me with a weapon inside the car, and that he did not see me shoot him.

The truth is that I was examined by three medical specialists:

(1) A Neurologist who testified that I was immediately paralyzed immediately after being shot.

(2) A Surgeon who testified that "It was absolutely anatomically necessary that both arms be in the air for Mrs. Chesimard to receive the wounds." The same surgeon also testified that the claim by Trooper Harper that I had been crouching in a firing position when I was shot was "totally anatomically impossible."

(3) A Pathologist who testified that "There is no conceivable way that it [the bullet] could have traveled over to hit the clavicle if her arm was down." He said "It was impossible to have that trajectory." The prosecutors presented no medical testimony whatsoever to refute the above medical evidence.

No evidence whatsoever was ever presented that I had a 9-millimeter weapon. In fact New Jersey State Police testified that the 9-millimeter weapon belonged to Zayd Malik Shakur based on a holster fitting the weapon that they recovered from his body.

There were no fingerprints, or any other evidence whatsoever that linked me to any guns or ammunition.

The results of the Neutron Activation test to determine whether or not I had fired a weapon were negative.

Although Col. Williams refers to us as the "criminal element," neither Zayd, or Sundiata Acoli or I were

Continued on page 16

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Assata Letter

Continued from page 15

criminals; we were political activists. I was a college student until the police kicked down my door in an effort to force me to "cooperate" with them and Sundiata Acoli was a computer expert who had worked for NASA, before he joined the Black Panther Party and was targeted by COINTELPRO.

In an obvious maneuver to provoke sympathy for the police, the NBC series juxtaposed my interview with the weeping widow of Werner Foerster. While I can sympathize with her grief, I believe that her appearance was deliberately included to appeal to people's emotions, to blur the facts, to make me look like a villain, and to create the kind of lynch-mob mentality that has historically been associated with white women portrayed as victims of black people. In essence, the supposed interview with me became a forum for the New State Police, Foerster's widow, and the obviously hostile commentary of Ralph Penza. Although I tried to talk about racism and about the victims of government and police repression, it was clear that he was totally uninterested.

I have stated publicly on various occasions that I was ashamed of participating in my trial in New Jersey trial because it was so racist, but I did testify. Even though I was extremely limited by the judge, as to what I could testfy about, I testified as clearly as I could about what happened that night. After being almost fatally wounded I managed to climb in the back seat of the car to get away from the shooting. Sundiata drove the car five miles down the road, carried me into a grassy area because he was afraid that the police would see the car parked on the side of the road and just start shooting into it again. Yes, it was five miles down the highway where I was captured, dragged out of the car, stomped and then left on the ground. Although I drifted in and out of consciousness I remember clearly that both while I was lying on the ground, and while I was in the ambulance, I kept hearing the State troopers ask "is she dead yet?"

Because of my condition, I have no independent recollection of how long I was on the ground, or how long it was before the ambulance was allowed to leave for the hospital, but in the trial transcript, trooper Harper stated that it was while he was being questioned, some time after 2:00 a.m. that a detective told him that I had just been brought into the hospital. I was the only live "suspect" in custody, and prior to that time Harper, had never told anyone that a woman had shot him.

In an NBC interview Gov. Whitman was quoted as saying that "this has nothing to do with race, this had everything to do with crime." Either Gov. Whitman is completely unfamiliar with the facts in my case, or her sensitivity to racism and to the plight of black people and other people of color in the United States is at a sub-zero level. In 1973, the trial in Middlesex County had to be stopped because of the overwhelming racism expressed in the jury room. The court was finally forced to rule that the entire jury panel had been contaminated by racist comments like "If she's black, she's guilty."

In an obvious effort to prevent us from being tried by "a jury of our peers," the New Jersey courts ordered that a jury be selected from Morris County, New Jersey where only 2.2 percent of the population was black and 97.5 percent of potential jurors were white.

In a study done in Morris County, one of the wealthiest counties in the country, 92 percent of the registered voters said that they were familiar with the case through the news media, and 72 percent believed we were guilty based on pretrial publicity. During the jury selection process in Morris County, white supremacists from the National Socialist White People's Party, wearing Swastikas, demonstrated carrying signs reading "SUPPORT WHITE POLICE."

The trial was later moved back to Middlesex County where 70 percent thought I was guilty based on pretrial publicity. I was tried by an all-white jury, where the presumption of innocence was not the criteria for jury selection. Potential jurors were merely asked if they could "put their prejudices aside," and "render a fair verdict." The basic reality in the United States is that being black is a crime and black people are always "suspects" and an accusation is usually a conviction. Most white people still think that being a "black militant" or a "black revolutionary" is tantamount to being guilty of some kind of crime. The current situation in New Jersey's prisons, underlines the racism that dominates the politics of the state of New Jersey, in particular and in the U.S. as a whole. Although the population of New Jersey is approximately 78 percent white, more than 75 percent of New Jersey's prison population is made up of blacks and Latinos. 80 percent of the women in Jersey prisons are people of color. That may not seem like racism to Gov. Whitman, but it reeks of of racism to us....

Whitman also claimed that my return to prison should be a condition for "normalizing relations with Cuba". How did I get so important that my life can determine the foreign relations between two governments?

As I watched Governor Whitman's interview the one thing that struck me was her "outrage" at my joy about being a grandmother, and my "quite nice life" as she put it here in Cuba. While I love the Cuban people and the solidarity they have shown me, the pain of being torn away from everybody I love has been intense. I have never had the opportunity to see or to hold my grandchild. If Gov. Whitman thinks that my life has been so nice, that 50 years of dealing with racism, poverty, persecution, brutality, prison, underground, exile and blatant lies has been so nice, then I'd be more than happy to let her walk in my shoes for a while so she can get a taste of how it feels. I am a proud black woman, and I'm not about to get on the television and cry for Ralph Penza or any other journalist, but the way I have suffered in my lifetime, and the way my people have suffered, only God can bear witness to.

Col. Williams of the New Jersey State Police stated "we would do everything we could go get her off the island of Cuba and if that includes kidnaping, we would do it." I guess the theory is that if they could kidnap millions of Africans from Africa 400 years ago, they should be able to kidnap one African woman today. It is nothing but an attempt to bring about the reincarnation of the Fugitive Slave Act. All I represent is just another slave that they want to bring back to the plantation. Well, I might be a slave, but I will go to my grave a rebellious slave. I am and I feel like a marooned woman. I will never voluntarily accept the condition of slavery, whether it's *de facto* or *ipso facto*, official, or unofficial.

In another recent interview, Williams talked about asking the federal government to add to the $50,000 reward for my capture. He also talked about seeking "outside money, or something like that, a benefactor, whatever." Now who is he looking to "contribute" to that "cause"? The Ku Klux Klan, the Neo-Nazi Parties, the white militia organizations? But the plot gets even thicker. He says that the money might lure bounty hunters. "There are individuals out there, I guess they call themselves 'soldiers of fortune' who might be interested in doing something, in turning her over to us." Well, in the old days they used to call them slave-catchers, trackers, or patter-rollers, now they are called mercenaries.

They call me the "most wanted woman" in America. I find that ironic. I've never felt very "wanted" before. When it came to jobs, I was never the "most wanted," when it came to economic opportunities I was never the "most wanted," when it came to decent housing," it seems like the only time Black people are on the "most wanted" list is when they want to put us in prison.

But at this moment, I am not so concerned about myself. Everybody has to die sometime, and all I want is to go with dignity. I am more concerned about the growing poverty, the growing despair that is rife in Amerika. I am more concerned about our younger generations, who represent our future. I am more concerned that one-third of young black are either in prison or under the jurisdiction of the "criminal injustice system." I am more concerned about the rise of the prison-industrial complex that is turning our people into slaves again. I am more concerned about the repression, the police brutality, violence, the rising wave of racism that makes up the political landscape of the U.S. today. Our young people deserve a future, and I consider it the mandate of my ancestors to be part of the struggle to insure that they have one. They have the right to live free from political repression. The U.S. is becoming more and more of a police state and that fact compels us to fight against political repression. I urge you all, every single person who reads this statement, to fight to free all political prisoners. As the concentration camps in the U.S. turn into death camps, I urge you to fight to abolish the death penalty. I make a special, urgent appeal to you to fight to save the life of Mumia Abu-Jamal, who is currently on death row.

It has been a long time since I have lived inside the United States. But during my lifetime I have seen every prominent black leader, politician or activist come under attack by the establishment media. When African Americans appear on news programs they are usually talking about sports, entertainment or they are in handcuffs. When we have a protest, they ridicule it, minimized it, or cut the numbers of the people who attended in half. The news is big business and it is owned operated by affluent white men. Unfortunately, they shape the way that many people see the world, and even the way people see themselves. Too often black journalists, and other journalists of color mimic their white counterparts. They often gear their reports to reflect the foreign policies and the domestic policies of the same people who are oppressing their people. In the establishment media, the bombing and of murder of thousands of innocent women and children in Libya or Iraq or Panama is seen as "patriotic," while those who fight for freedom, no matter where they are, are seen as "radicals," "extremists," or "terrorists."

Like most poor and oppressed people in the United States, I do not have a voice. Black people, poor people in the U.S. have no real freedom of speech, no real freedom of expression and very little freedom of the press. The black press and the progressive media has historically played an essential role in the struggle for social justice. We need to continue and to expand that tradition. We need to create media outlets that help to educate our people and our children, and not annihilate their minds. I am only one woman. I own no TV stations, or radio stations or newspapers. But I feel that people need to be educated as to what is going on, and to understand the connection between the news media and the instruments of repression in America. All I have is my voice, my spirit and the will to tell the truth. But I sincerely ask, those of you in the black media, those of you in the progressive media, those of you who believe in truthand freedom, to publish this statement and to let people know what is happening. We have no voice, so you must be the voice of the voiceless.

Free all political prisoners. I send you love and revolutionary greetings from Cuba, one of the largest, most resistant and most courageous palenques (maroon camps) that has ever existed on the face of this planet.

Assata Shakur
Havana, Cuba

All power to the people!

Indeterminate Sentencing

Continued from page 5

1940s that began to populate the prison system in significant numbers from the mid-1950s onward. Joining the defiant, nonconforming African Americans were urban Mexican Americans.

These young men of color had not suffered the raw, brutal psychological and physical terror their parents had, and had no fear of or respect for racist white people and their authority (if the police bust a cap on us, we believed it was right to bust back! It was right to fight regardless of who/what the adversary was. We grew up being taught not to accept crap from anybody! It was part of our characters long before being exposed to the politics of organized resistance and revolution! But we were not bullies.) So, you can imagine these opposing groups, in a controlled, confined environment, had all the elements that would ultimately explode into open warfare.

Entering the prison system, these young men of color were a strange animal to the racist prison guards and administrators; they were completely alien to the conforming white convicts the guards were accustomed to dealing with.

For these men of color the fair and just application of the indeterminate sentence was a fantasy. It did not matter how many rehabilitative programs the blacks and Latinos completed, they were denied parole time after time after time because they refused to submit to a racist authority in which they did not believe. So, a progressive concept – the indeterminate sentence – became an instrument of discrimination and repression in the hands of mean-spirited racists! And, of course, the white convicts were given parole.

Chip's Story

Under the sentence of death, I had an automatic appeal of conviction and sentence directly to the California State Supreme Court. Before my case was affirmed, capital punishment was ruled unconstitutional in February 1972. Therefore, my sentence became seven years to life with the possibility of parole.

So, when my automatic appeal was denied in 1973, I had served half the minimum, and should have been eligible for parole in 1976. After my release to the general population, my strategy was to keep my politics quiet and stay away from any violence, not giving the authoritarians the chance to bury me in solitary confinement. And be out in 10-13 years – which was the average for first degree murder with the possibility of parole.

Obviously it hasn't played out that way. As the racial demographics in the California prison system began to shift to a larger percentage of blacks and latinos, and a younger age group, the powers that be flipped the script beginning in the late 1970s when I was nearing my time for parole.

Since the authoritarians were no longer dealing with the exclusive club of white males, they did not feel compelled to play fair with people of color. They've seized upon every opportunity to circumvent the rule of law.

In accordance with California statutory law, a life sentence with the possibility of parole does not mean a "life sentence". It means a person can be held indefinitely if his/her behavior poses a danger to society.

The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled the California Penal Code Statutes have created a constitutionally protected liberty interest and an expectation of release. Which to me means the BPT must release me! It is federal law. So, at this point it's not about guilt or innocence. The question is: will my release put society at risk?

Prior to my involvement with the BPP, I had no history of violent crime or behavior; while in prison, I have no violence or weapons possession charges – not even a fist fight; no political advocacy or connection with militant groups.

Conclusion

I'm now positioned to litigate for my freedom. And the community support should not be asking for my release – no! They should be assertive and demand it! We're not asking for a favor – we're demanding they follow the rule of law!

Just as now, the "tough on crime" position of the parole board – with their claim of representing the consensus of society – is using the indeterminate sentence to keep radicals and revolutionaries incarcerated – their decisions are clearly political! Hell, they don't even want us out to participate in the bourgeois electoral process because we will use that process to erode their control and empower the people! It isn't the indeterminate sentence that's the problem, its the same "assholes" we've been fighting all along.

by Chip Fitzgerald, B-27527

Chip can receive your letters at:
B-27527 CSPLACO
P.O. Box 4430
Lancaster, CA 93539-4430

All Power to the People!

CCBPP Photo

Valentine Hobbs (foreground) and James Johnson, former BPP members, spoke to the audience about the benefit of the survival programs.

Seattle Conference

Continued from page 10

show. "My drawing was political, and I often used cartoons to depict the oppression and greed of the capitalist. Sometimes I would draw hungry children. U.S. dropping bombs on poor people in other parts of the world, or we would draw pictures of the pigs and the politicians in gross violation of the people from the black community, just as they violate the people in Vietnam. Stories and images that depicted the police mind-set was part of our campaign to end police brutality that was widespread across the country at the time. We demanded community control of the police, the schools, the health clinic, and living wage jobs. Our survival programs set the examples of what was needed on a larger scale. When Bobby Seale and Elaine Brown ran for office in Oakland we portrayed them as the People's candidates, promoting our survival programs (survival pending revolution) and our Ten-Point Platform throughout the process."

After the featured speakers, the program wound down with young people taking to the stage with selections of hip-hop music and dance, poetry, and song. The M.C., Shamseddin Williams, whose parents were Panthers, thanked the volunteers for their participation and thanked everyone else for attending the program. In the cafeteria, BPP archives were displayed for viewing, and CCBPP volunteers circulated newspapers, encouraging participants to submit articles and topics for *The Commemorator* reflecting current-day struggles in the Seattle area, along with national and international affairs.

Anyone interested in organizer training with CCBPP was and is always encouraged to sign up by contacting CCBPP at 510-652-7170.

All power to the people!

Direct from New Orleans

Continued from page 5

know why — so his wife and kids wouldn't go in. They kept walking, and they happened to run across a guy with a tow truck that they knew, and he gave them his own personal truck.

When they got here, they had no gas, so I had to punch a hole in my gas tank to give them some gas, and now I'm trapped. I'm getting around by bicycle.

People from Placquemine Parish were rescued on a ferry and dropped off on a dock near here. All day they were sitting on the dock in the hot sun with no food, no water. Many were in a daze; they've lost everything.

They were all sitting there surrounded by armed guards. We asked the guards could we bring them water and food. My mother and all the other church ladies were cooking for them, and we have plenty of good water.

But the guards said, No. If you don't have enough water and food for everybody, you can't give anything. Finally the people were hauled off on school buses from other parishes.

You know Robert King Wilkerson, the only one of the Angola 3 political prisoners (a founder of BPP branch inside the Angola prison) who's been released. He's been back in New Orleans working hard, organizing, helping people. Now nobody knows where he is. His house was destroyed. Knowing him, I think he's out trying to save lives, but I'm worried.

It's not like New Orleans was caught off guard. This could have been prevented.

There's military right here in New Orleans, but for three days they weren't even mobilized. You'd think this was a Third World country. I'm in the Algiers neighborhood of New Orleans, the only part that isn't flooded. The water is good. Our parks and schools could easily hold 40,000 people, and they're not using any of it…

This is criminal. These people are dying for no other reason than the lack of organization.

Malik Rahim
All power to the people!

Black Oak Books

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CCBPP STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Commemoration Committee for the Black Panther Party (CCBPP) is committed to the goals of the Black Panther Party (BPP) as outlined in its Ten-Point Program which was written in 1966 by Party founders, Dr. Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale.

The Ten-Point Program outlines goals and objectives toward changing conditions of economic exploitation and political oppression in all low-income and working class communities in the U.S. and elsewhere, as the basis for unity and solidarity.

Also, the CCBPP is committed to the concept of Revolutionary Intercommunalism, introduced by Dr. Newton in 1970 at Boston College. Our Revolutionary Intercommunalism holds that there are basically two sides. On one side there is reactionary intercommunalism which presently holds the world's low-income and working communities under conditions of economic exploitation and political oppression by controlling the wealth, resources and institutions in order to maximize profits for the few. Huey identified this side as the leading reactionary side (the ruling class) which consists of a minority, fewer than five percent of the world population. Under these conditions, reactionary intercommunalism, by and large, keeps the poor and working communities on a cycle of degradation, under conditions of reaction, desperation and poverty, with no end in sight. Newton understood that in order to change these conditions and advance the economic and cultural interests of these oppressed communities of the world, disciplined organizations must be built from the bottom up, enabling these low-income and working communities to fight exploitation and oppression by any means necessary (this fight needs to start in the advanced industrialized U.S. because our nation leads the world in political reaction and economic exploitation). CCBPP advances and upholds the goals which the BPP outlined in its Ten-Point Program, and those goals are about ridding black ghettos and low-income and working communities of economic exploitation and political oppression, understanding that we can reach these goals only by seizing the time at the point of practice.

Black Panther Party Ten-Point Program

WHAT WE WANT, WHAT WE BELIEVE

1. WE WANT FREEDOM, WE WANT POWER TO DETERMINE THE DESTINY OF OUR BLACK AND OPPRESSED COMMUNITIES. We believe that Black and oppressed people will not be free until we are able to determine our destinies in our own communities ourselves, by fully controlling all the institutions that exist in our communities.

2. WE WANT FULL EMPLOYMENT FOR OUR PEOPLE. We believe that the federal government is responsible and obligated to give every person employment or a guaranteed income. We believe that if the American businessmen will not give full employment, then the technology and means of production should be taken from the businessmen and placed in the community so that the people of the community can organize and employ all its people and give a high standard of living.

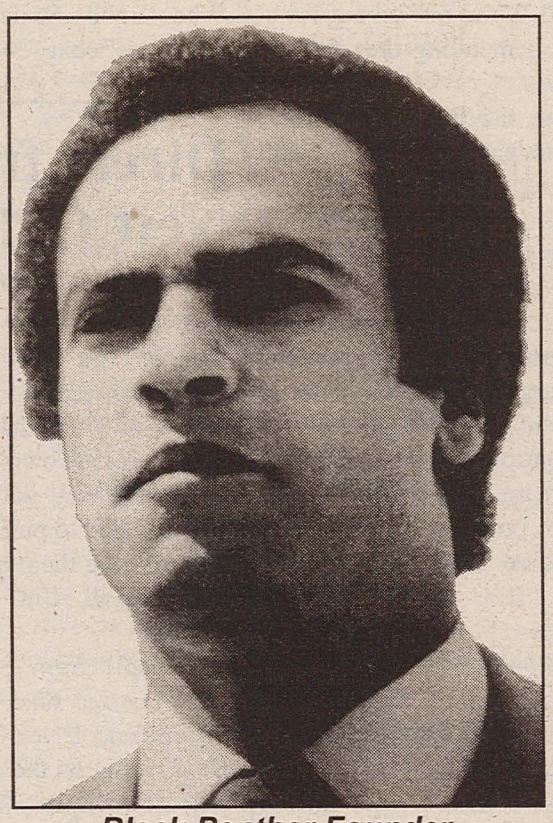
3. WE WANT AN END TO THE ROBBERY BY THE CAPITALIST OF OUR BLACK AND OPPRESSED COMMUNITIES. We believe that the racist government has robbed us and now we are demanding the overdue debt of forty acres and two mules. Forty acres and two mules were promised 100 years ago as restitution for slave labor and mass murder of Black people. We will accept the payment in currency that will be distributed to our many communities. The American racist has taken part in the slaughter of over fifty million Black people. Therefore, we feel this is a modest demand that we make.

4. WE WANT DECENT HOUSING, FIT FOR THE SHELTER OF HUMAN BEINGS. We believe that if the landlords will not give decent housing to our Black and oppressed communities, then housing and the land should be made into cooperatives so that the people in our communities, with government aid, can build and make decent housing for the people.

5. WE WANT EDUCATION FOR OUR PEOPLE THAT EXPOSES THE TRUE NATURE OF THIS DECADENT AMERICAN SOCIETY. WE WANT EDUCATION THAT TEACHES US OUR TRUE HISTORY AND OUR ROLE IN THE PRESENT-DAY SOCIETY. We believe in an educational system that will give to our people a knowledge of self. If you do not have knowledge of yourself and your position in the society and the world, then you will have little chance to know anything else.

6. WE WANT COMPLETELY FREE HEALTH CARE FOR ALL BLACK AND OPPRESSED PEOPLE. We believe that the government must provide, free of charge, for the people, health facilities that will not only treat our illnesses, most of which have come about as a result of our oppression, but will also develop preventive medical programs to guarantee our future survival. We believe that mass health education and research programs must be developed to give all Black and oppressed people access to advanced scientific and medical information, so we may provide ourselves with proper medical attention and care.

7. WE WANT AN IMMEDIATE END TO POLICE BRUTALITY AND MURDER OF BLACK PEOPLE, OTHER PEOPLE OF COLOR, ALL OPPRESSED PEOPLE INSIDE THE UNITED STATES. We believe that the racist and fascist government of the United States uses its domestic enforcement agencies to carry out its program of oppression against Black people, other people of color, and poor people inside the United States. We believe it is our right, therefore, to defend ourselves against such armed forces and that all Black and oppressed people should be armed for self-defense of our homes and communities against these fascist police forces.



Black Panther Founder, Dr. Huey P. Newton

8. WE WANT AN IMMEDIATE END TO ALL WARS OF AGGRESSION. We believe that the various conflicts which exist around the world stem directly from the aggressive desires of the U. S. ruling circle and government to force its domination upon the oppressed people of the world. We believe that if the U. S. government or its lackeys do not cease these aggressive wars that it is the right of the people to defend themselves by any means necessary against their aggressors.

9. WE WANT FREEDOM FOR ALL BLACK AND POOR OPPRESSED PEOPLE NOW HELD IN U. S. FEDERAL, STATE, COUNTY, CITY, AND MILITARY PRISONS AND JAILS. WE WANT TRIALS BY A JURY OF PEERS FOR ALL PERSONS ARE CHARGED WITH SO-CALLED CRIMES UNDER THE LAWS OF THIS COUNTRY. We believe that the many Black and poor oppressed people now held in U. S. prisons and jails have not received fair and impartial trials under a racist and fascist judicial system and should be free from incarceration. We believe in the ultimate elimination of all wretched, inhuman penal institutions, because the masses of men and women imprisoned inside the United States or by the U. S. military are the victims of oppressive conditions that are the real cause of their imprisonment. We believe that when persons brought to trial that they must be guaranteed, by the United States, juries of their peers, attorneys of their choice and freedom from imprisonment while awaiting trials.

10. WE WANT LAND, BREAD, HOUSING, EDUCATION, CLOTHING, JUSTICE, PEACE AND PEOPLE'S COMMUNITY CONTROL OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY. When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to affect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and, accordingly, all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But, when a long train of abuses and usurpation, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism. It is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security.

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AIDS in Africa: New Plague or Old Illnesses of Poverty?

Racist HIV Myth Hides Ruthless U.S. Exploitation.

Unlike in the United States, AIDS in Africa is most frequently diagnosed based on four very imprecise clinical symptoms—diarrhea, fever, persistent cough, and weight loss greater than 10% over two months. *HIV antibody tests are not required to diagnose a case of African AIDS.* These four clinical symptoms are identical to the problems created by conditions of poverty that have troubled Africa and other developing areas of the world for centuries. In fact, symptoms of the so-called African AIDS epidemic are indistinguishable from the effects of malnutrition, unsanitary drinking and bathing water, and common curable conditions like malaria, cholera, tuberculosis, and parasitic infections.

Rather than solve the problems of African poverty caused by centuries of ruthless Western exploitation, the U.S. government insists on broadcasting the doomsday notion that Africa is suddenly gripped by a deadly, spreading sexual plague. According to these American health authorities, salvation from sickness can only be found in profitable pills manufactured by the white West and exported to black Africa.

America's Racist HIV Myth

The idea that AIDS originated in Africa is a popular myth without any scientific or epidemiological evidence. News reports that blame AIDS on African green monkeys are based upon elaborate speculation about species-jumping viruses rather than reliable proof. Tall tales about the spread of AIDS are promoted through the most vulgar and racist sexual stereotypes about promiscuous African people.

Still, the numbers speak for themselves. According to the 1999 *WHO Global HIV/AIDS Report,* the total number of AIDS cases in Africa virtually equals the total number of cases in America even though Africa, with its 650 million citizens, has more than two times the population of the United States. Africa is often cited as a worst case example of what could happen in America despite figures demonstrating that 99.5% of Africans do not have AIDS, and among Africans who test HIV positive, 97% do not have AIDS.

While Africa is the frequent target of damaging AIDS media reports, the total number of cases on the continent is relatively small. For example, from 1981 through 1999 cumulative AIDS cases for South Africa, the area claimed hardest hit by HIV, were just 12,825.

Exporting Extermination: AIDS Pills Kill!

It is undeniable that experimental AIDS treatments like protease inhibitors and AZT are all highly toxic, dangerous products. Strokes, muscle wasting, anemia, physical deformities, dementia, birth defects, organ failure, and death are some of the "side effects" of these poisons. Thousands of gay men in the 1980s and 1990s died from AZT poisoning. Now the U.S. State Department has elevated AIDS to the level of a threat to national security in order to gain public support for exporting AZT to pregnant African women. Outspoken leaders like South African President Thabo Mbeki—hard pressed to explain why developing nations stricken with famine and civil chaos should spend what little money they have on toxic anti-HIV drugs while millions starve—are relentlessly attacked as unfit and crazy by racist Western media outlets.

We invite you to investigate the growing international controversy over the cause and treatment of AIDS for yourself. Clip and mail the coupon below for a free copy of the groundbreaking book *What If Everything You Thought You Knew About AIDS Was Wrong?* by AIDS survivor Christine Maggiore.

The Truth About African AIDS:

- **HIV antibody tests are not required for an AIDS diagnosis in Africa.**
- **African AIDS is diagnosed by four very imprecise clinical symptoms:**
  - **— Diarrhea**
  - **— Fever**
  - **— Persistent cough**
  - **— Weight loss greater than 10% over two months**
- **Tuberculosis, malaria, and measles far outnumber cases of AIDS in Africa.**
- **AIDS is not the leading cause of illness or death in any African nation.**

Fight the AID$ Fraud!

ACT UP San Francisco is the AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power—a militant, direct action organization committed to ending the AIDS fraud. General body meetings are held every Monday night at 7:30 p.m. at 1884 Market Street and our medical marijuana dispensary is open 12:00 to 7:00 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday. Get involved. Join ACT UP! End the abuse of AIDS.

Clip and mail the coupon below to receive a free copy of the book *What If Everything You Thought You Knew About AIDS Was Wrong?* or contact us for more information at www.actupsf.com!

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Rosa Parks

Continued from page 1

(Montgomery) and state (Alabama) levels. She led voter registration campaigns as early as 1945.

Rosa Parks' refusal to move from the seat on the bus was part of a tactic to overthrow the bus segregation laws that the local NAACP chapter had been planning for some time. Prior to December 1, 1955 the very young Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and others involved were already building organization to carry out a bus boycott and to take the results of that tactic further to bring a federal court case challenging the entirety of the Jim Crow segregation laws. When Ms. Parks was arrested and taken to the city jail for refusing to give up her seat, they organized a network of support for her and her case, and called the boycott into motion that same night.

At the height of the bus boycott a network of volunteers were providing transportation to and from work for more than 20,000 people a day with volunteer taxi drivers and many others using their own cars. Many of the drivers were whites who supported the struggle to end segregation.

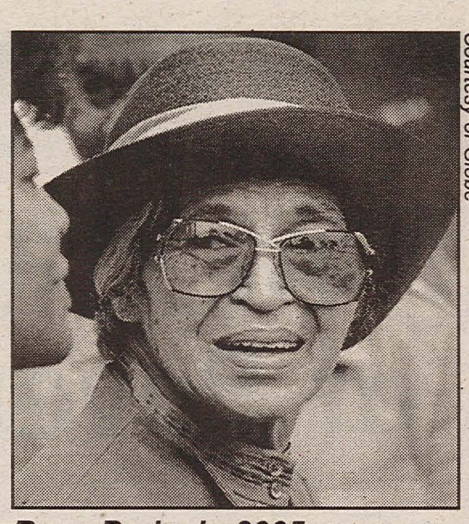
Ms. Parks said that many times history too often maintains that her feet were hurting and she didn't know why she refused to stand up when they told her. "But the real reason of my not standing up was I felt that I had a right to be treated as any other passenger. We had endured that kind of treatment for too long."

In a formal statement on the passing of Parks, Winnie Mandela, a leader in the South African fight to end apartheid, paid tribute. "Rosa Parks' resentment of white supremacy was an inspiration to many of us in South Africa who were fighting the evil system of apartheid. Her activism played a part in our own struggle. Rosa Parks showed us that you don't have to be in the forefront to be regarded a leader." The mass boycott of the bus system tactic used successfully in Montgomery brought the bus company to the brink of bankruptcy, inspired oppressed people all over the world and was mirrored in economic tactics used by the ANC to fight apartheid in South Africa.

Parks became a symbol, an icon and an important catalyst for the growing liberation and revolutionary movement in the United States. In the wake of the boycott, still more militant and youthful organizations began to develop, including Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Deacons for Defense (organized by Robert Williams in Lowndes County, Louisiana), and the Black Panther Party.

Years later, in 1996, Parks was not afraid to publicly memorialize and eulogize Robert Williams, despite his having been rejected by the movement for his militancy and his seeking asylum in the socialist camp, and despite her own reputation for non-violence and her affiliation with Dr. King and the policy of strategic non-violence he espoused.

As the bus boycott, coordinated by the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA), made up mostly of all the local black ministers, grew and won tactical victories through their determination and willingness to work overtime in organizing people and getting the story out, they also faced local reaction, including the bombing of MIA leadership's homes and many instances of police harassment and false arrests.



Courtesy of Globe

Rosa Parks in 2005.

The movement achieved such force in the 1960's that President Lyndon B. Johnson, a white Southern opportunist politician (who always seemed to have trouble pronouncing the word "Negro"), pushed the US Congress to pass the Civil Rights Act of 1964, banning racial discrimination in public accommodations.

As the struggle against segregation advanced, economic and class issues came to the forefront as the underlying issues, and the movement began to abandon the co-optable demand for "civil rights" and to take up the revolutionary demand for economic power, recognizing that racism and institutionalized racialism are tactics of the ruling class to keep members of the working class fighting each other for the crumbs falling from the rulers abundant table. The victory to sit anywhere we want to on the bus that was won as a result of Rosa Parks' historic action is not a revolutionary achievement as long as we have no economic power and continue to only receive crumbs.

Dr. King was assassinated when he moved from fighting against segregation and racism to an understanding that the deeper fight is against poverty, and when he called for working class unity and fundamental economic change. That is when those in power could no longer tolerate his movement, and they killed him.

In 1996 President Clinton awarded Ms. Parks the Presidential Medal of Freedom. The bourgeoisie and their lackeys sometimes grudgingly bestow awards on our leaders. At the same time, they continue to torture and assassinate other revolutionary leaders and to rewrite or bury our history and the true meaning and goal of our struggle. These reactionary policies and efforts to co-opt our people are another indication of the strength of our movement, which the bourgeoisie work to appease, or use divide and conquer techniques to break up. In the face of this reality we must work even harder to strengthen our struggle, be true to our goals and objectives, and carry it on until we win. The fight is not over, and the goal of Rosa Parks' life and struggle has not yet been achieved.

The greatest honor that we can give to one of our fallen warriors is to pick up their weapon and carry the struggle onward to victory. Rosa Parks' weapon was organization, not individual spontaneous action. Long Live Rosa Parks and the lessons she taught us. VIVA!

All Power to the People!

BPP Archive

In 1980, children of the BPP's Oakland Community School performed a play about Rosa Parks' December 1, 1955, Montgomery, Alabama bus protest.

BPP Archive

Rosa Parks receives a bouquet of roses from Mayonna, an Oakland Community School student .

BPP Archive

Parks with BPP leader and Oakland Community Learning Ctr. Director, Ericka Huggins.

On November 15, 2005 the Oakland City Council unanimously passed a Resolution by the Million Worker March Movement (MWMM) to make every December 1 Rosa Parks Day. After Oakland, California adopted the Resolution, Boston, Detroit, Philadelphia, Cleveland, and Los Angeles, followed suit. Below is a copy of the actual document presented by Clarence Thomas of San Francisco ILWU/Local 10.

City Council
CITY OF OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

Resolution

Resolution Honoring the 50th Anniversary of Rosa Parks' Historic Refusal to give up her Bus Seat and Declaring December 1st Rosa Parks Day in the City of Oakland.

WHEREAS, Rosa Louise McCauley was born February 4, 1913 in Tuskegee, Alabama to James McCauley, a carpenter, and Leona McCauley, a school teacher; and

WHEREAS, at age of 11 she enrolled in the Montgomery Industrial school for Girls and later at Alabama State Teachers College. At Twenty, Rosa married a barber named Raymond Parks; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Parks, fifty years ago on December 1, 1955, refused to give up her bus seat to a white passenger in Montgomery, Alabama, resulting in her arrest, and

WHEREAS, Mrs Parks' defiance triggered the famous Montgomery Bus Boycott and earned her the title Mother of the Civil Rights Movement; and

WHEREAS, the 382-day Boycott introduced the world to Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who was President of the Montgomery Improvement Association and the Boycott's spokesperson; and

WHEREAS, the federal district court on June 4, 1956 ruled bus segregation unconstitutional; and

WHEREAS, the Southern Christian Leadership Council later established annual Rosa Parks Freedom Award in her honor and President Clinton presented Mrs. Parks with Congressional Medal of Freedom in 1995; and

WHEREAS Mrs. Parks founded the Rosa and Raymond Parks Institute for Self-Development to offer guidance to young African-Americans; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Parks spent her last years in Detroit, where she died on October 24, 2005 at the age of 92; now therefore be it;

RESOLVED, that the Oakland City Council remember Rosa Parks and the sacrifices that she made in advancing civil rights; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Oakland City Council proclaims December 1st 2005 as Rosa Parks Day in the City of Oakland and honors Rosa Parks by flying the flag of the United States of America at half mast on all City of Oakland properties and encourages its residents and businesses to take part in Rosa Parks Commemoration events on that day.

IGNACIO DE LA FUENTE
President of the Council

DESLEY BROOKS – COUNCILMEMBER

HENRY CHANG – COUNCILMEMBER

NANCY J. NADEL – COUNCILMEMBER

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PAT KERNIGHAN – COUNCILMEMBER

JANE BRUNNER – VICE MAYOR

DEBORAH EDGERLY – CITY ADMINISTRATOR

I CERTIFY THAT THE FOREGOING IS A FULL, TRUE AND CORRECT COPY OF A RESOLUTION PASSED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA ON

LATONDA SIMMONS – CITY CLERK

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